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CASTLES IN THE AIR.

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VOL. II.

CASTLES IN THE AIR.

A NOVEL.

BY MRS. GORE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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CASTLES IN THE AIR.

CHAPTER I.

C'était un bon enfant dans la force du terme;
Très bon, et très enfant; mais quand il avait dit,
"Je veux que cela soit," il était comme un terme.
Il changeait de dessein comme on change d'habit,
Mais il fallait toujours que le dernier se fit.

H. DE MUSSET.

I DID what I still considered the best thing to have been done; *i. e.* hurried down into Yorkshire, and told my own story to Sir Robert.

"Of course!" quoth some Mrs. Candour of a reader, "and no doubt to your own disadvantage!"

Ay! as I live by bread! Not a shade did I soften of my egregious turpitude and folly. The only person weak enough to extenuate both, was

my kind guardian. Moved either by my reliance on his clemency, or because the lapse of three-score years and ten tend to the softening of the human head as well as the human heart, nothing would persuade him but that somehow or other, his ward had been ill-used. Already it had become tolerably plain to me, that the possession of eighteen thousand a year, like charity, covereth a multitude of sins; and that it sometimes goes so far as to transfer them to the shoulders of less fortunate persons.

"See the ill-consequences of sending a boy to a second-rate country school," murmured the old gentleman at the close of my confessions. "But for *that*, you would never have made acquaintance with such a person as young Grove!"

"Surely you must perceive, dear Sir," cried I, "that he alone has been the sufferer—that he, the only innocent person in the business, has been the *only* sufferer."

"And what do you call your expulsion, then?"

"Not expulsion. There was no expulsion in the case."

"At all events you were forced to withdraw from Cambridge on the eve of taking a degree which would have done you honour for life."

"And Andrew, on the eve of taking orders, which would have secured him ease and competence."

"Why must he needs be a clergyman? At *his* age, a man has time enough before him to enter into some other profession."

"After rustication?"

"If not one of the learned professions, some honest calling. You say he is only a farmer's son."

"A yeoman's son."

"Then why not article himself to an attorney?"

"A sad exchange, my dear Sir, for a profession which would have placed him at once on the level with gentlemen, and gratified the honest pride of his family, which this unlucky business levels with the dust."

"Say rather overweening pride, my dear boy. What business have such people to educate a son for the church; in which, after all, he might

never have earned his bread? A curacy of forty or fifty pounds a year would most likely have been his portion, till, in his old age, some meagre piece of college preferment fell in."

"You forget, Sir," said I, adding a considerable number of cubits to my stature as I delivered myself, "you forget, Sir, the living of Rainham!"

"Rainham?" ejaculated my poor guardian, aghast. "Why you don't mean to say that this yeoman's son—this dissolute Bachelor of Divinity—is the person you intended to impose upon the county as a creditable incumbent for so important a cure as Rainham?"

"Do not say 'dissolute,' Sir. There does not exist a man of purer morals or more exemplary life."

"Pshaw, Sir—pshaw, my dear boy! Would a disreputable woman like this Nancy Dixon—Nixon—what is it?—have ventured to take refuge in the rooms of a young man of exemplary character? No, no! your friend appears to have been as loose a liver as yourself; and sooner than see such a fellow inducted into a living of which my poor friend Wrottesley was

the patron, and his uncle and grand uncle former rectors, much as I counted, Harry, on your Cambridge honours, I would have had matters turn out as they stand."

"But my dear, dear Sir Robert," cried I, interrupting him, "you cannot have understood my hasty and confused account of the business if you imagine that either Andrew Grove, or even the tailor's unlucky wife, were anything but a victim!"

And again I went over the grounds, deliberately and circumstantially; but without shaking the prejudices of judge or jury. Whatever might be the case with Andrew, it was clearly lucky that I had not to get forward in life by my eloquence, if my present ill-success were predictive of my career at the Bar; for at the close of my pleading, Sir Robert renewed his former ejaculation of "A sad business, indeed; but all the result, my dear Harry, of your having been brought up at Eagle House."

As it mattered little to poor Andrew whether Sir Robert went to the grave aware or unaware of the bitterness of his aggrievements, I gave up the point. No use talking about it! He *chose*

to believe me the injured party, and a wilful man must have his way.

I had pressing motives, too, for conciliating my venerable guardian. Though able as a minor to postpone the settlement of my affairs at Cambridge, I was desirous to avoid leaving a double cloud upon my name; and to enable me to discharge my embarrassments, the aid of Sir Robert was indispensable. I might, perhaps, have succeeded in coaxing over Gripham—who, unable to keep up the farce of an intended litigation of the will, was now my most obedient humble servant;—but this I should have scorned. Or I could have obtained the sum in request with the aid of Roxborough and his Jews, at an exorbitant rate of interest; but this was a ruinous system. I appealed, therefore, in the most straightforward manner to my guardian; and having informed him without flinching that "six thousand pounds would scarcely cover liabilities which would acquire a frightful addition by standing over till I came of age," I doubt whether a soldier under punishment ever stood more in need of a bullet to gnaw for the assuage-

ment of his agony, than I while silently clenching my teeth in expectation of the old gentleman's decision on a point so nearly involving my respectability in life.

I renounced all thoughts of the prospects he had held out. I felt that his confidence in my well-doing was gone for ever. My Castles in the Air must either melt into the clouds or become precipitated into the mire. But if my guardian consented to redeem my disparaged credit, I was content.

But the shock he had received from learning the possibility of the presentation of Rainham —the pulpit of which had been graced in alternation by Wrottesleys and Hawleys—being wasted upon a farmer's son of indifferent character, had left his understanding more than usually shaky. After begging me to ring for his own man, he called for a saline draught and proposed to retire to his own room; and before we parted, four-and twenty hours' deliberation was agreed upon for the consideration of his verdict.

A pleasant four-and-twenty hours they proved to me! In the irritation of my mind, my veins

were one minute scorched with fever; the next, my hands seemed to have been plunged in ice. The most excruciating recovery from the stunning effect of Blank Blank's potations,—the worst fit of indigestion after a Trinity lobster salad, all cucumber, olives, and anchovies,—was an agreeable sensation compared with my present flutter of mind and body; especially after learning that an express had been dispatched to Wakefield for the attendance of the close-fisted Gripham.

How I shuddered on perceiving his horrible buggy drive up to the Hall door, and a blue bag taken out from the chaise seat! Had he been Sir Astley Cooper coming to amputate my leg, and had the blue bag contained the instruments for the operation, I could not have felt more heart-sick!—

As yet, I had seen my guardian only in his indulgent moods; and could no more opine what he might become if exasperated, than one who has studied marine views in summer time in the Bay of Naples, can conjecture the aspect of a typhoon. And when after wasting a sleepless

night in picturing to myself the most ferocious phases in which guardian-nature can demonstrate itself, I entered his dressing-room at the appointed time and saw the table covered with papers and parchments, and Gripham in attendance on his principal like a hangman's assistant, my heart contracted till it could have been little larger than a wren's!—

"Sit down!" said Sir Robert, pointing to a chair placed ready for me, as for a patient at a dentist's; and on seeing me hesitate, as if beseeching a reprieve, he added, "for we have accounts of some length to go through."

Though he spoke in a tolerably firm voice, I discovered a scent of ether in the room; as though, poor old fellow, he had required that stimulus to enable him to go through a scene so unpleasant.

"At the request of Sir Robert Hawley, Mr. Wrottesley," said Gripham, whose cue it was to open the proceedings, "I have hastily jotted down, for your instruction, an abstract of the sums expended (errors excepted) on account of the estate of my late revered client, Mr. Francis

Wrottesley, since his demise;—partly, Sir, in advances made to yourself, and partly in the administration of the property. Of the former, I find to your account a sum of 12,234*l.* 16*s.* 9*d.* Of the latter—including the funeral expenses of the deceased, and the payment of probate-duty and legacies, servants' wages, necessary repairs, King's taxes, and poor's rates,—a sum of 13,480*l.* 7*s.* 4*d.*, the particulars of which expenditure lie on the table before you. Subtract these sums, Mr. Wrottesley, from the gross amount of general receipts of the estate, and you will find a balance of 9,095*l.* remain to the account of the estate, at present invested in the Wakefield bank of Messrs. Sneak, Klose, and Rumblebottom."

I could only bow my assent. The arithmetic of the case was indisputable; or I, at least, felt no disposition to contest it.

"I have furthermore to place before you, Sir," added Gripham, looking fixedly in my face, over his spectacles, "the estimate made by an architect of the highest reputation—Mr. Astragal, of York—of the sums necessary to be

expended in substantial and ornamental repairs, in order to place the mansion, known by the name of Wrottesley Hall, in a fitting state for habitation on the attainment of your majority, which, with upholsterers' contracts for the completion of the same, I find to amount in the aggregate to 17,205*l.* odd shillings. Wages, salaries, taxes, and other incidental expenses of the year still to elapse before the completion of your majority, will raise this sum to 23,240*l.*; to meet which, Sir, we shall have in hand—adding the balance now established, and the rents still to be received—the sum of 27,095*l.*; leaving—without taking into account taxes, wages, and unforeseen expenses to be deducted—a balance in your favour, on the attainment of your majority—under the name of savings—of 3,850*l.*; without reference to my own account (for self and partners), and unforeseen casualties of various kinds."

Again I bowed; but, on the strength of so dispiriting an announcement, less deferentially than before.

"I learn, however, from Sir Robert Hawley,"

added Gripham, gathering firmness of voice and malignity of eye as he approached the head and front of my offending, "that you are in immediate want of a sum of between six and seven thousand pounds; which, with the allowance to be made you during the ensuing year, would not only extinguish the balance in question, but leave you debtor to the estate in the amount of 5,500*l.*"

A pleasant prospect! And to such a manifesto I had only to bow, once more, my patient submission.

"For this sum, Mr. Wrottesley," resumed the attorney, encouraged by my stultified silence, "your most excellent and indulgent guardian is willing to make himself accountable. But on certain conditions."

I did not again content myself with a formal inclination of the head; but seizing the hand of Sir Robert Hawley, pressed it to my lips. I knew that conditions of *his* proposing could not be otherwise than honourable.

"Your guardian is strongly desirous," resumed the attorney, as if unobservant of my start,

"that you should break through, at once, certain injudicious connexions you have formed, at college and elsewhere; to which end, he advises that you should instantly quit the country. With attendants of your own choice (subject to his approval), he trusts you will visit the continent; and—since the completion of your education has been rendered impossible by your own imprudence—devote to study the valuable year of leisure remaining to you previous to your entrance into life; partly in some German university or Italian college; partly (for the acquirement of the French language) in Paris."

Having been initiated at some length by the Honourable Blank Blank (of Guards and Hussar experience), into the variety of agreeable facilities awaiting the aspiring linguist on the banks of the Seine, I saw nothing much to complain of in this clause of Sir Robert's conditions.

"We have further to require," added Gripham (gradually progressing, by means of the regal pronoun, towards the "*ego et rex meus*" constituting his inward sense of the relative

position of executor and attorney to the Wrottesley estates,) "we have further to require, Sir, that, previous to the attainment of your majority, you enter into no further engagements respecting the disposal of your Church preferment; and that, should the living of Rainham fall in during the interim, you will do nothing without previous communication with Sir Robert."

This stipulation was somewhat humiliating to my consequence; but how was I to resist any item of conditions so moderate? Even had the irritation produced by Gripham's dictatorial tone and hinted reprobation extended my resentments to my kind guardian, a thousand unwelcome images of Cambridge duns and London claimants would have risen in judgment before me, to bid me accept, and be thankful. —And I accepted, though less thankfully than they expected.

"I am in no position, Mr. Gripham," said I, with more than my wonted *hauteur*, "to resent being conditioned with, like a child, by those to whom I am forced to place myself under obligation. But I trust you will believe, dear Sir,"

I continued, turning with more amenity towards my mild old friend, "that there needed only the expression of your opinion on so important a point as Church patronage, to determine mine, so far as it is unshackled by engagements. It grieves me, however, to find so sacred a responsibility as you have referred to, involved in a miserable question of the discharge of my boyish debts."

Sir Robert, in whose heart every honourable sentiment found a ready echo, listened with a heightened colour and an approving eye; and was evidently about to relieve me from the last-imposed restraint, when he was checked by a glance from the attorney.

"The request which you call a condition, Mr. Wrottesley," interrupted Gripham, "would have been made, under recent circumstances, even without your application for pecuniary assistance."

More and more disgusted by the prominent part taken by Gripham, or rather the prominent part tacitly assigned him by Sir Robert, I rose from my seat to put an end to the conference.

"It is therefore understood, Sir," said I, again pointedly addressing Sir Robert, as if the attorney's last observation had been spoken to the winds, "that I submit to the terms imposed upon me, on condition of being placed in immediate possession of seven of the nine thousand and odd pounds accumulated in the hands of Messrs. Gripham, Sneak, and Klose."

"In the Wakefield bank," interposed the attorney.

"In which it appears that two of your partners are concerned," said I, firmly; "leaving the future repairs or improvements of Wrottesley Hall wholly unattempted, till the attainment of my majority; when I shall have made up my mind concerning the expenditure I wish to be made."

Gripham looked sheepish enough; for it was his purpose to make a job of the improvements, which Sir Robert was too great an invalid to supervise. But even the old gentleman himself was startled by what he understood as an intimation of non-residence at the Hall. Had I intended to reside there, I must, he thought,

have been thankful to find it in perfect order to receive me on coming of age; especially as the funds for its completion were to be chiefly of his own providing.

"On that head, Harry," said he, gravely,—perceiving, with gentlemanly tact, that I scorned to make unreserved confession in presence of Gripham,—"let us have a little further talk together, previous to your departure for the continent. Time will be wanted for a prudent adjustment of your college liabilities; and to leave England for a year's absence, will require a month's preparation."

"A fortnight Sir, or less, will suffice," said I cheerfully, though with difficulty repelling a painful swelling in my throat, as I advanced to shake hands with the old man.

"Why, you are not going to leave me to-day?" he exclaimed, thrown off his guard by the movement. "I have still much to say to you.—Surely you are not going to leave me to-day?"

"With your permission, Sir, I shall be glad to get back to Wrottesley. I do not feel well.

Having been lately much harassed, I shall be glad of a few days' quiet, secure from business or intrusion."

This last inuendo was aimed at Gripham; who, I was determined, should not violate the privileges of my hearthstone.

Nor was my avowal of indisposition a mere pretext. The tremors I had experienced the preceding night, were symptomatic: the emotions of the past week having accelerated to a crisis a fever lurking in my veins, produced by the excesses of the last two years. While still shaking hands with Sir Robert, so deadly a faintness came over me, that I was forced to resume my seat.

"Admit, my dear Harry, that it is impossible for you to leave the Chase in this condition?" faltered the anxious old gentleman.

"On the contrary, my dear Sir," said I, rallying my strength to the best of my power, "I must hasten home, lest I should become too ill for removal. Nicholls, who has known my constitution from infancy, and nursed me through several serious attacks, will be my best doctor."

Allowing him no leisure to remonstrate, I left the room, and was soon on my road. I had some difficulty, however, in sitting my horse. The road seemed to rock under our feet. The landscape grew indistinct to my eyes, escaping me now and then, like objects contemplated at sea during the tossing of a vessel. But that my sure-footed beast was at that moment master of his master, I should scarcely have reached the Hall in safety. As it was, on setting foot on the staircase, to hurry to my own room, I lapsed into a state of total insensibility.

Nothing further of my illness can I bring distinctly to mind, till I woke in a chamber pungently scented with aromatic vinegar; through the obscurity of which I dimly discerned a female figure, seated at some distance from my couch!—

CHAPTER II.

Quæcunque dixit, si placuerint, dictavit auditor.

GENTLE reader, are your sensibilities a little excited?—But for the hope of hurrying your hand as you turned the leaf of a new chapter, I should have called my "couch" a "bed,"—a simple four-post bed, the most prosaic of great British antediluvianisms; and honestly admitted that the female musing or dozing in my arm-chair, was no other than my sister Emily.

Poor Nicholls, terrified out of his few remaining senses by my sudden seizure, had sent for spiritual as well as medical advice; and the first act of Dr. Temple—on finding the penitent, to whose bed-side he was summoned, in a state of

stupor,—was to dispatch an express for my family.

Emily came at once. My mother (who was slowly recovering from one of her now periodical attacks of rheumatic gout) made her appearance, with Dora, two days afterwards; and though I should have placed a veto on their being sent for, let me thankfully acknowledge that their coming proved my salvation. Not that they were better nurses than the old housekeeper; or that the stir in my room, caused by their occasional hysterics, was of particular service. But on perceiving how ruefully the country doctors shook their heads after the second consultation, they, who regarded my life as worth eighteen thousand per annum and had no Yorkshire prejudices to propitiate, insisted on advice from town.

"What signified two or three hundred guineas, when my existence was at stake!"

Dr. Temple wisely replied, that time rather than money was the thing to be economized; and, at his suggestion, an eminent physician was sent for from Edinburgh, who caused my

head to be immersed in ice, while my corpse-like body was enveloped in sheets saturated with brandy, so as to stimulate the circulation of the blood without aggravating the cerebral irritation.

This bold innovation, which sent poor Nicholls to his paternoster and set the country doctors' wigs on end, produced the most salutary effect; and it was a day or two after the adoption of the new system, that I became conscious of the presence of my sister.

That struggling back from the brink of the grave, is a fearful and a painful strife! It is so long before one becomes certain—if, indeed, at all,—which of the impressions imbibed during our restless hours of torment were the result of delirium, and which were real. The foretaste of a disembodied state,—the visions of supreme bliss or terrors of penal judgment, which flutter round the pillow of sickness,—either foreshowings sent in warning by the Almighty, or emanations of a morbid state of body,—are only the more puzzling to the soul, for the debility

into which it is betrayed by the frailty of the flesh linked to its immortal aspirings.

At the close of the three weeks usually assigned as the term of such a fever as mine, I could scarcely make out whether the maimed and bleeding Nancy Nixon who had haunted my bed-side, or the pale and resentful Andrew by whom my proffered hand had been constantly rejected, were forms as substantial as those of the kind parent and anxious sisters, who relieved each other as watchers in my sick-room; or whether Dora, Emily, and their weeping mother were but the coinage of my brain, like the other wandering forms which beset my hour of danger.

By the time my poor old guardian was allowed to visit me, however, I was completely myself. And though, thanks to my flowered dressing-gown, tremulous hand, and chicken broth, I seemed to have changed places with him, to my shame be it spoken, that the tears trembling down his wan cheeks were a stronger indication of sensibility than, sick or well, had ever been manifested on mine.

I will not dwell on the tediousness of my convalescence ;—though I got well as quickly as I could, not only from impatience of a sick room and its restraints, but because it made me sadly nervous to know that councils, colloquies, and comparing of notes were going on betwixt my mother and sisters on one side, and Sir Robert and Gripham on the other ; to say nothing of Dr. Temple's admission into the general confidence. One hates to be talked over and discussed, with an air of superiority, as though in a strait waistcoat or one's coffin—I might as well have been dead at once, as so thoroughly on the shelf.

When my strength returned sufficiently to admit of conversation, I was careful to afford no new data for their conjectures concerning the origin of my illness ; or what I should have done had the state of my mind, during my danger, admitted of my executing testamentary dispositions. But the first time I felt myself alone with Nicholls, I could not refrain from asking him concerning the inquiries after my welfare.

" Had the Roxboroughs sent ?"

The old man remained so stupidly unconscious, that I had to reiterate my question till my mind misgave me concerning the reality of his deafness.

"Be so good as to answer me, Nicholls," said I gravely; "have Sir Gratian Roxborough and his family inquired after me during my illness?"

"In course they have, Sir. Every soul in the neighbourhood was sending."

"And the Roxboroughs among the rest, Nicholls?"

"Most days, Master Harry. At first, twice a day."

"And why was I never told of it?"

"You were too ill to be troubled."

"But yesterday—when you brought me Lord Meadowley's card, and a message from Mr. Courtfield, of Courtfield?"

"I was desired, Sir, to say nothing about any message from Roxborough Elms."

"And by whom, pray?"

"By Sir Robert Hawley, Sir."

I was about to explode into angry vitupera-

tion. Luckily, before the word "officious old fool" could pass my lips, my compunctious memory recalled the fatherly services I had so gratuitously received at his hands.

"But what could possibly make Sir Robert desire, Nicholls," said I, "to keep me ignorant of the kindness of my friends?"

"Because, Mister Harry—I hope, Sir, you won't get me into trouble with Sir Robert and the ladies for having told you the truth—because there was a great dispute, such time as you was at your worst, between Lawyer Gripham and Sir Gratian"—

"About me?"

"About the old gentleman's insisting on being admitted to your sick room; which Mr. Gripham wouldn't by no means hear of."

"And for once he was right!" said I, reflecting upon the annoyances that might have arisen had Sir Gratian Roxborough been an auditor of my frenzied ravings while my pillow was beset by the imaginary forms of his daughters and Henry Temple, and I kept adjuring the latter to resign Caroline to my embraces and take in exchange

the living of Rainham, the Archbishopric of York, the kingdom of England itself,—all that a disordered brain could pretend to dispose of.

Now however that, like Richard, I was myself again,—though a sorry self it was,—I determined that my first rational act should be to signify my gratitude to the Roxboroughs; and having ascertained from Nicholls that the hour at which my good guardian's quizzical chariot and long-tailed horses drew up under my portico for his daily visit, (of the hour set apart for which, nearly a quarter was required for his ascending the staircase, and as much for the return, breathing his asthma in an arm-chair at every landing,)—was twelve of the clock, I dispatched my groom to the Elms, thanking the old gentleman for his attentions, and begging him to call on me about two o'clock the first disengaged afternoon.

Next morning, when Sir Robert took his usual leave by enjoining me to be sparing in my diet and unsparing in my doses of quinine till he saw me again, I fancied myself free for the day: when lo! my poor mother saw fit to instal her-

self in the place he left vacant; and began to enlarge, for the first time since her arrival, upon the pomps and vanities of Wrottesley Hall. "A little town!" she called it, "which nothing but a gas-contractor could ever light up into cheerfulness."

"As to draughts and chills," she said, "nothing less than two Angola shawls, three Welsh whittles, and the two boas of my two sisters superadded to her own, had preserved her from such an attack of the rheumatism as would have conveyed her straight from the family mansion of the Wrottesleys to their *domus ultima*."

It was scarcely necessary to quote in reply an item I had noticed in Gripham's abstract of the needful improvements done under my roof, of a hundred pounds or so to the Dowsons of stove immortality, for a patent apparatus for warming the house.

"You must have found yourself sadly uncomfortable, my dear boy," resumed the maternal voice, which even in my sick room, with the thermometer at seventy, issued from a mountain

of wraps—"on first arriving here from poor snug little Hentsfield. A clue or guide must have been wanting to enable you to find your way in your own house! Why, the cavalry barracks at Bristol did not occupy a wider ground-plan; and Dora, who has the eye of a tax-gatherer, declares that there are half as many windows again, as in the frontage of Ashridge!"

"The façade is some feet longer than the celebrated one at Kedleston," said I, far from insensible to any tribute of applause offered to my *palazzo*.

"But the grander it is, my dear Harry," resumed my mother, "the more I am surprised you should ever have thought of settling here alone!—Such a wilderness as it is!—Such desolation!—I'm sure I don't wonder the chilliness of the house should have given you the typhus fever."

"My disorder was the fen fever, mother, of which I brought the seeds with me from college. At Cambridge, indeed, I was seldom or ever well."

In addressing one's mother, it was needless to

add, "as seldom as Johnson and Justerini's maraschino, or the Honourable Blank Blank's lime-punch, allowed me to rise without a head-ache."

"In that case, Harry," resumed the mountain of shawls, "I am sincerely glad you have made up your mind to have done with college. For my part, I cannot understand the use of degrees, except to parsons or physicians. The poor dear Colonel, your father, was never at college at all. But was he the worse soldier or gentleman for *that?*"—

Rejoiced to see her reconcile herself so easily to the disaster she so little comprehended, I thought the moment a good one to explain that, if I accompanied her back to Hentsfield according to her desire for change of air, it would only be on my way to the continent; where I intended to await my coming of age. But what was my surprise when, instead of bursting into remonstrances, she treated the affair as a joke.

"Ay, ay!" said she. "We all know what vagaries sick people are apt to indulge in. As you lie there in your dressing-gown, I dare say

it is amusing enough to plan voyages and travels. But when you get to Hentsfield you will sing a different song. It will be hard, indeed, if you cannot pick out from among our four pretty neighbours at Crowsden Grange a companion for life who would render even Wrottesley Hall more habitable."

So, then! this was the plot against my peace! Not a little amused by the old lady's *naïveté* in affording me timely warning, I could not refrain from a few inquiries concerning the fair foe lying in ambush against my arrival in Hertfordshire; in reply to which, too eager to be very distinct, my mother contrived to group the family in such inextricable entanglement, that it was only by a strong effort of mind I was enabled to detach before my mind's eye Miss Stormont,—full-blown and dignified, "a very superior young woman;" Ellen, dark and romantic as a Dona peeping from behind the jalousies of some balcony in Seville; Louisa, a gentle elegiac beauty, all whispers and tears; and last and least, Rose,—the spoiled child of the family,—concerning whom even my mother

shook her head, as though it were painful to think what might be the result of her girlish indiscretions.

In the wide field thus afforded to my choice, there was something piquant and exciting enough to make me almost regret I had not an idle month to waste at Hentsfield, in the pleasant pastime of being fallen in love with; especially as my mother, with her usual candour or simplicity, betrayed the established opinion of her fireside,—that should one of the four quarters of Crowsden Grange ever become Mrs. Wrottesley Wrottesley, Dora would recover her chance of becoming the future Lady Stormont.

"You see, my dear Harry," said she, drawing her chair nearer my sofa for a confidential whisper, "the greater part of Sir Thomas's property goes to his daughters. Crowsden and the title alone are entailed on his nephew; and were the girls substantially settled in life, the old Baronet's pride would urge him to do something for the future representative of his name, to enable him to perpetuate the family honours."

"Likely enough!" was my rejoinder. "But

why not remove a quarter of the difficulty by uniting him with one of his cardinal virtues?"

"The young ladies may have other inclinations. In these days, young folks enjoy the privilege of choosing for themselves; and from the moment Reginald Stormont became acquainted with your sister Dora, I can assure you that"—

What she could assure me, the fates denied me to learn; for at that moment the said sister, as if magnetically apprised that we were discussing her prospects matrimonial, hurried with a flushed air into the room.

"There is the strangest old man in the drawing-room," cried she, "who declares, my dear Harry, that he has an appointment with you."

"One of the physicians!" observed my mother, as oracularly as if not infallibly fallacious in her guesses.

"Oh! no—not a physician. He looks and talks much more like the tipsy gardener in the Barber of Seville!"

"Ring, and desire Nicholls to show him up,"

said I; in this slight sketch, recognising Sir Gratian.

But there needed no showing up. Old Roxborough had followed close at my sister's heels; and now clattered towards me, and embraced me with a sort of blubbering affection which appeared to the mincing gentility of my Hertfordsire relations almost as vulgar as his north country wrap-rascal and leather gaiters.

"Never expected to see you again, my boy! Was afraid 'twas all up with Cock Robin!" cried the old man, wiping in succession his eyes, his red nose, and his bald head with the same thin worn Bandana. "Always said that Cambridge would knock you up,—always said 'twould knock you up! Those confounded crabbed mathematics are enough to soften the core of a crooked billet!"—

"Your family I hope are well, Sir Gratian?" said I, with undisguised interest; but withdrawing my hand, now none of the stoutest, from his rough hugging.

"*Well?* Ay! *They're* well enough. They're *always* well,—unless, now and then, poor Car when she gets a fit of the no-hows! But I can

tell you that Ad'la, flighty as she seems, was half beside herself when the report of your illness reached us. The Archdeacon brought us the bad news one day at dinner, a'ter calling at Hawley Chase. And nothing would serve the girls, though 'twas sleeting arrow-heads and Whitechapel needles, but I must on with my great coat, and ride over to the Hall, forsooth, to see what was going on! Not that I made much bones about it; for I know how a helper's answer to a message can be trusted, after a second glass of table ale! How'sever, helper or groom, or head coachman, or what not, might ha' brought back as good comfort as *I* did:—that you were lying on your back, as white as your sheets and senseless as your bolster, with all the doctors in the county gathering about you, like crows upon a carrion."

My mother and sister—and now, perhaps with some reason—looked ineffably disgusted.

"And I can tell you, my dear Wrottesley," continued the old man, taking no more heed of their presence than of that of the bed-curtains —for my conduct had done little to inspire the

neighbours with deference towards my family—"I can tell you that when I got home again, and blurted out the state of the case, poor Car got as pale as a ghost, and trembled in every limb; while Ad'la, half out of her wits, kept wondering half a dozen times in a minute—*who* was the next heir to the Wrottesley estates!"

"Ay, next heir to the advowson of Rainham!" was my secret rejoinder. "But I shall live to disappoint them yet!"

"As to Charley," continued Sir Gratian, "not content with making us write to town every morning, to say how you were going on, he must needs have a line of an a'ternoon by the 'Highflyer' coach."

No wonder!—His father little knew how many thousands of pounds my premature decease would have left him minus!

"No good, h'wever, dwelling on what's past!" resumed the old gentleman, again attempting to shake my hand. "We've distanced the undertakers this time, and that's all that matters. You've cut college, I find, eh? or college has cut you,—which comes to pretty

near the same; and I warrant, after the shake you've had, you'll sow your wild oats, and settle at the Hall for good and all. Who knows but before hunting's over, we shall have you at last in the saddle!"

"A little out in your reckoning, my dear Sir Gratian!" said I, bitterly mortified by all he had let fall. "At the very moment you made your appearance, I was on the point of offering Wrottesley Hall as a residence to my mother and sisters. For a twelvemonth and a day to come, I shall see what health and wisdom I can pick up on the continent."

"Why zounds! you're not going to let yourself be plucked by the Mounseers?" cried Sir Gratian, who piqued himself upon being what he called "English to the back-bone." "A pretty look-out for Charley!" added he, after a moment's consideration. "Charley had set his heart on your spending some time with him in town!"

Charley Roxborough's "heart" was a thing indefinite as the longitude. Nevertheless I expressed becoming gratitude; and began to

inquire so circumstantially after his amusements and pursuits, that my mother and sisters discreetly withdrew, eager perhaps for a family discussion of the prospects I had incidentally unfolded; and no sooner did I find myself alone with Sir Gratian, than I managed to extract from him that innumerable notes had passed during my illness between the Elms and the Rectory.

"Since that plaguy disagreeable piece of business with Temple's brother," added the old gentleman in a confidential tone, "I had docked all intimacy, you know, betwixt my girls and the parson. But as Ad'la assured me she wrote only to obtain news of you—knowing that the Doctor 'd been called for at the Hall,—I even let matters take their course."

And thus, the Rector of my parish and the girl at whose feet I would fain have laid my fortune and my heart, had probably been settling together from whom, the moment my eyes were closed, they should endeavour to extract a promise of the next presentation to Rainham!

That evening—when boozing, in domestic

confidence, with my family over my barley-water,—it was amusing to observe the round-about approaches by which my mother neared the subject of the residence at Wrottesley to which I had adverted. Not, as the reader may conjecture, moved by desire to take possession of the great house; but trying to find out how I should be least affronted by their determination to decline the proffered honour.

"Nothing can be kinder on your part, Harry," said my mother, "than the wish I heard you express to your eccentric old guest, that we should reside here during your absence. But I hope you won't take it amiss, my dear boy, if I say that, with all the grandeur of Wrottesley Hall, Hentsfield is twice as pleasant. A great rambling place like this, requires a whole regiment of servants to make it tolerably comfortable."

"Comfortable!" ejaculated Dora, glancing towards a gloomy grove of pine-trees, the only green thing—and that verging on sable—visible from my windows. For she was too thoughtless to consider that, even at Hentsfield, her bright

flower-plots of geraniums, fuchsias, and salvias were at that season of the year in eclipse, and her shrubberies as leafless as my own. "Comfortable? You must have been married half a dozen years, Harry, and added as many olive branches to your fireside, before such a house as this could feel inhabited! Not a brick in the conservatory holds together, and the gardens are as naked as Leicester Fields!"

"As to neighbourhood," added her sister, "if we are to take the old monster to whom you were so civil this morning as a specimen, I would as soon settle in New Zealand as among such people! Consider, my dear Harry, the difference between this and Hentsfield, where we have Panshanger, Hatfield, Gorhambury, Brocket, Tittenhanger within visiting distance!"

"They were quite as much within visiting distance," was the mental reflection of her dear Harry, "at the time you thought me a monster for not transporting hither my whole family, house, and household, as in a fairy tale, and settling them in my park!" But I contented myself with replying aloud, that distances

were not measured in Yorkshire as in the counties adjoining the metropolis; that some of those I considered my neighbours lived forty miles off—others at a still greater distance; and that we visited each other, like the patriarchs of old, with our flocks and herds, our slaves and our camels,—that is, with our hunters, grooms, waiting-maids, and *valets de chambre*,—to say nothing of pointers, setters, and lap-dogs.

"I dare say it is a proof of wretched taste," said Emily, with a scarcely disguised yearning towards Crowsden Grange; "but I must say that the snug habits of Hentsfield, and the cozy sociability of our neighbourhood, appear to me twice as agreeable as this seven-leagued boot sort of hospitality."

I had no inclination to dispute the point. Even I—Wrottesley Wrottesley of that ilk—was just then sadly out of charity with my Yorkshire neighbours. To think that Caroline Roxborough, with that seraphic face of hers, should be capable of inquiring, ere the breath was out of my body, who was the next patron of Rainham!—

To prove to my family, meanwhile, that I was not touchy with them for refusing what I had never offered till experience taught me how little it was worth acceptance, I complied with their entreaties that we should all travel together to the South; and even promised to spend a few days with them at Hentsfield, while ropes were being adjusted to my travelling carriage, and a courier added to my *état major*.

From that moment, the girls took care that quinine should not be wanting, in order to expedite my convalescence. Every morning, they hastened to inform me that I looked wonderfully better than the preceding night; and when poor old Nicholls, on seeing me resume my usual attire, declared with uplifted hands and tears in his eyes that I was wasted to a shadow, Emily pettishly retorted, "that it was very unkind of him to say so. But that he was known of old for a croaker!"

"At all events," added Dora, "pray remember, Harry, what an appetite you used to have at Hentsfield! Once there, you will grow as rosy as your friend, Sir Gratian!"

Having made up my mind to go, I offered no opposition to their theories; and all was in train for our speedy departure, when lo! one morning as the girls hurried into my room from a winter trudge in the shrubberies,—their woollen shawls steaming with hoar-frost, and their clumsy clogs still adhering to their boots,—they found a stranger seated by my fireside, differing as widely from either my guardian or Sir Gratian, as—to use a favourite simile of the latter—a pine-apple from a pippin.

Had you ever occasion to admire, good reader, at a theatrical rehearsal, the art with which a good stage-manager (such as one of the Farrens) disengages, one by one, the lumbering shapeless group of silk and broadcloth heaped in the middle of the stage; and, by placing the *dramatis personæ* at their proper distances, assigns meaning to their actions and intelligence to their words? Such was the influence exercised by Charles Roxborough at Wrottesley Hall, within ten minutes of his arrival! Every body and every thing had changed its relative position. My sisters addressed me with defe-

rence when they saw the finest of fine gentlemen, my bosom friend, and heard him declare that he had given up the last shooting-party of the season at Oatlands, to hasten down into Yorkshire for the pleasure of a day spent in my company.

In my turn, I thought more of my sisters on perceiving that, so far from disparaging them as country dowdies, Charles Roxborough addressed them with far greater respect than he was in the habit of conceding to the fairest of the Yorkshire belles.

It is true, the consequences of typhus fever are sometimes as fatal as the malady itself; and in case of my death, unmarried and intestate, my mother was naturally my heir, and her daughters would become co-heiresses. But in all the honesty of its twenty years, the heart is incapable of so cold-blooded an estimate of people's conduct and motives. Charles Roxborough was then the type of gentlemanliness in my eyes. Uncorrupted by the vileness of the world, I did not preconceive corruption. How frightful it is, by the way, to meet, in

maturer years, a person one has known as young and pure of soul as Wrottesley Wrottesley in his teens,—transformed into a double-dealing worldling, encrusted with duplicity and vice! A lovely face disfigured by the small-pox is not more painful to contemplate. The human mind may be pitted quite as hideously as the body!—

But to return to Charley. It was diverting enough to see the two girls, so apt to lay down the law to my inexperience in matters of etiquette and the graces of life, suddenly struck dumb and timid by the presence of one from whom the king of exquisitism was supposed to take lessons. Vulgar perforce, of hyper-refinement, they talked like the Précieuses Ridicules, and were affected as the very devil. But Charley, who was only come to ascertain in case of a relapse what testamentary dispositions I had made for the payment of my debts, had no fault to find with them; except when they chose to stay and do the honours of the luncheon table, when he "wanted to be alone with his friend."

How they talked about him when he was gone! That is, how each pretended to criticise him, lest the other should perceive how much she was captivated by the graceful, polished ease which never raised its voice or hurried its movements; which said so little, but that little ever so *à propos*; and which, so far from indulging in the coarse quizzing just then the order of the day, expressed its sense of fastidiousness by a pitying smile, and silent avoidance of the persons or things by others vociferously decried.

I had, of course, begged him to stay dinner. But Charley, who was little in the habit of exposing his comfort to the contingencies of so unsettled an establishment as mine, pretending a promise to his father, looked at his watch, and was off. Next day, however, he returned uninvited; accompanied by his sister Adela, whom he had evidently dragooned into doing the honours of the county to my mother and sisters.

Too indignant, however, against Roxborough Elms to promote any further intimacy, I cut

short the engagements proposed, by announcing that, being now well enough to travel, our journey was fixed for the morrow.

On the morrow therefore we started; but such was my weakness, that we were forced to make three days of it between Wrottesley and Hentsfield; and amid the dingy dreariness of an inn evening (in which nothing but a hippopotamus, like Dr. Johnson, could surely ever have found delight), I had the satisfaction of hearing Dora remark to Emily, or Emily to Dora, that "it would be most unfair were they to abuse Yorkshire; having seen it under circumstances so painful, and at a season so peculiarly disadvantageous."

There was no end to their recantations.

"One must admit," whispered my elder sister, "that if Sir Gratian Roxborough be a boor, the rest of the family are charming."

"And I confess," retorted the younger, "that I should not have been sorry to have had a little peep at Roxborough Elms."

I would not have given much for young

Stormont's chance, even backed by the entail of Crowsden Grange, had he returned to his allegiance while the grave smile and graceful bow of Charles Roxborough still exercised their charm !—

CHAPTER III.

She was not beautiful, they said:
I felt that she was *more;*
One of those women women dread,—
Men, fatally adore.

MRS. TORRE HOLME.

Her speech is nothing:
Yet the unshaped use of it doth move
The hearers to collection; they aim at it,
And botch the words up fit to their own thoughts.

SHAKSPEARE.

If I submitted at Wrottesley to be a trifle sister-ridden, it was partly from the feebleness of indisposition,—partly because my family were guests in my house; and, more than all, because I was far less desirous of a *tête-à-tête* with either Charley or his father, than they with me.

But at Hentsfield, my sense of independence returned; and I made it so clearly apparent that the length and frequency of my future visits would depend on my enjoying the uninvadable privacy of my own room, unsummoned to visitors, unmolested by visits, that I was allowed to pursue my reveries in the old chamber,—no longer, alas! either green or dimitied,—as uninterruptedly as in the days when I was a lout in whose purse the largest coin of the realm was a dollar.

If popular prejudice can be credited, young people are apt to grow during illness. That they effect a preternatural mental progress, I am convinced. With what different eyes, for instance, did I contemplate Hentsfield and its inhabitants *now* and at my last visit! Either *I* was wonderfully changed, or every thing around me.

In that room where, sleeping or waking, I had dreamed so many dreams,—in that room where, as a youngster, I had constructed Castles in the Air, such as might have put Aladdin's to shame,—it was impossible not to indulge in

a little philosophy. If, in the prosaic insignificance of my boyish days, I had framed such poetic visions,—establishing myself now as a solitary misanthrope at Venice, to ponder away my life among blue canals and mouldering palaces; or as a hermit, amid the vineyards and olive-gardens of the Conca d'Oro; sometimes as a plumed and tattooed chief, among the Micmacs of the Backwoods, or as a missionary to the dusky tribes of Ind, or Hakim, dispensing health and civilization to the fever-struck Kraals of Africa; or, like little Jack in the story-book, as a Tâtar Khan, with a stud of thousands of horses, or, with a pilgrim's staff in hand, a wanderer among the ruined cities of Mexico, and the Assyrian wilds,—these vain imaginings had not melted more completely into air, than the more substantial projects of my adolescence.

My first chimera, after attaining a position in life nearly as miraculous as any of the strange adventures I had chalked out for myself, was to secure an independence to Andrew Grove, such as would enable the disinterested friend of my

boyhood to pursue his studies like a gentleman, and perhaps eventually attain the highest dignities of the Church. And *him*, in the wantonness of my heart, I had converted into a ruined and broken-hearted man!

My second castle, constructed for my own glorification, had been as little respected as the first. The public honours which were to form a stepping-stone to my political ambitions, and establish me as a county member, the representative of the united estates of Wrottesley Hall and Hawley Chase, and an aspirant to a peerage,—had been sacrificed by the same contemptible act of folly which rendered my embryo Bishop Heber an outcast!

My projects, both sage and silly, had been equally evanescent; and my follies far greater than announced by the accusation of Gripham. Instead of having simply squandered the savings of my minority, so as to leave the improvements of Wrottesley problematical, Charles Roxborough and his Jews could testify that nearly two years' income was anticipated! Such, in short, would be my embarrassments on coming of age,

that the seat in Parliament once coveted by my patriotism, was likely to become available to me as a spendthrift!—

Could I do otherwise than shudder, as I reflected on all this! For what had I to show for my wastings? I had done little enough for my family,—little enough for my credit. I had eaten my apples green, my venison lean; had quaffed unripe wine, and mounted my colts unbroken. Like every other ruined heir, from the days of Timon of Athens to those of the Golden Ball, I had been victimized by scorners who called themselves my friends, and made only disreputable acquaintance.

As I stood gazing out of the self-same window on the self-same landscape which produced my first fit of rumination, I could not help cursing in my heart the influence of routine in this worldly world of ours, which reduces the asses tramping in its wheel to the same wretched subservience. Though conceiving myself a mighty genius and reserved for great things, had I not myself been guilty of all the vulgar littlenesses which make pygmies of the most aspiring of mankind!

The reader may chance to recollect, that from my original reverie in the green chamber, I was summoned to take possession of eighteen thousand a-year. On the present occasion, I was merely disturbed by the rumbling up to the door of the old family coach of all the Stormonts. According to my conventions with my mother, no one ventured to apprise me of the visit; and yet, moved by the innate perversity of contrarious human nature, I felt affronted at not being summoned. I was awaiting the return of a messenger I had despatched to Wilsbury with a letter addressed to poor dear Andrew, containing a five hundred pound note (part of the travelling money supplied by Gripham), to pay off his modest Peter House expenses. And yet anxious as I was to hear that he bore me no deadly enmity for having, in mere inconsideration, blighted his prospects for life, I was idiot enough to feel mortified at not being summoned to flirt with the four Miss Stormonts!

"No doubt," thought I, "they are cross-questioning my sisters concerning this renowned

Yorkshire seat of mine, and all its appurtenances; and Dora and Emily (the jades!) are telling them I have got *pour tout potage* by way of neighbours, a crack-brained sottish old Baronet, whose daughters have sent me to Coventry, and whose son is endeavouring to send me to the King's Bench. But I will be beforehand with them, and throw myself like a hand-grenade into the enemy's camp."

Having thrust my arms into one of Stultz's most unimpeachable morning coats, and passed through my hair one of Delcroix's ivory brushes saturated with Vegetable Extract, I hurried down accordingly, without a glimpse at the glass. But though that cruel teller of home-truths might have apprized me, that a sickly young man of twenty, infirm of gait and gamboged in complexion, is nearly as unsightly an object as a limp-haired boy in out-grown nankeens, two or three courtships of which I had been the object at Cambridge and in Yorkshire, convinced me that all the beauty of my park and picture gallery was permanent in my face;

and that a man possesses in his rent-roll the true cestus of Venus.

I scarcely know what degree of elasticity I could have attributed to a family coach; for I certainly entered the drawing room prepared to find four Miss Stormonts smiling at me from the four points of the compass. Instead of which, I was hastily presented to a remarkably lady-like old woman, the mother of my Maccabees; and a peach-faced Dudù-looking damsel of six-and-twenty, in whom I readily recognized Miss Stormont. There remained only an apish little imp in a pink bonnet, who did not wait to be introduced; but after expressing her surprise that I resembled neither Dora nor Emily, informed me she was "their friend Rose."

"We were all terribly afraid at Crowsden, Mr. Wrottesley," said she, leaving time neither to mother nor sister for formal inquiries after my health, "that you would detain the girls the whole winter in the North. People are so fond of citing Yorkshire hospitality! But I dare say

it is all stuff! The truth is, (isn't it?) that apart from the manufacturing towns, the county is so thinly inhabited and the aborigines so stupid, that when they can lay hands on strangers, they don't like to let them go again."

I was rising to explain in the plainest prose that, not having yet taken up my residence in Yorkshire, I was unable to confirm her hypothesis; when the spoiled child, fonder of hearing herself talk than other people, remorselessly interrupted me.

"One is so sure to be disappointed," said she, "in the things one travels to find! There is no cross you know at Banbury,—no cheese at Stilton,—no hams at Bayonne,—no obelisk at Luxor,—no bas-reliefs at the Parthenon! And I dare say, if I could get Dora and Emily to tell the truth, they would own that they had eaten no Yorkshire pie at Wrottesley Hall, nor been much fêted by your neighbours."

"Their object in visiting Wrottesley," said I, meaning to be bitter on her flippancy, "was I

believe, to nurse a sick brother. That purpose they very kindly fulfilled."

"Did they? Then I must say you do very little credit to their nursing!" cried Miss Rose, not a whit abashed. "You do not look half so well as I expected to see you."

"You don't take into account, my dear," interrupted my mother, who, lest I should be put out of conceit with the whole Stormont family by this missish specimen, thought it better to interfere, "that Harry is still suffering from the fatigues of his journey."

"I did not, indeed.—But if three days on the road suffice to knock him up, my dear Mrs. Powerscourt," rejoined the wayward girl, "how is he ever to accomplish the Odyssey which Emily has been announcing? My cousin Reginald visited the cataracts in Upper Egypt, and nearly all the monuments of the Holy Land. But *he* has the strength of a lion!—Reginald could find his way to Bombay and back, and be none the worse for it."

"When I return from my tour without

having seen all Mr. Stormont has seen, I give you leave to call me a spooney," said I, so much out of temper as to be a little out of taste.

"To call you a *what?*" —nquired Rose, either really or affectedly puzzled.

"To pronounce me an unmanly sluggard," cried I, compelled to look a little sharper after my phraseology. But Dudù seemed to think I had been sufficiently stung by the little firefly; and dropping her conversation with Dora, began to talk sense to me, which was heavy work after the nonsense of her little sister. There is a Roman camp near Wrottesley, concerning which she cross-questioned me at great length, gesticulating all the time with her arms extended *en espalier*, till I fairly wished her buried in its trenches.

"Why bore poor Mr. Wrottesley about the Romans, Mary!" cried the rose-bud, pettishly interrupting her. "According to all accounts, *his* acquaintance lies chiefly among the Greeks!"

And this from the damsel who, a moment before, had pleaded ignorance of a slang expres-

sion! Her cousin Reginald, doubtless! O loves and graces—O purity and holiness, at what hour of the morning must one rise to discover a simple feminine nature, where neither brother nor cousin has been beforehand with one in affording a bite of the forbidden apple!—Where, *where* is one to seek those virgin sands, on which, as on Crusoe's island, no savage footprint has been set!

The two mothers, meanwhile, perceiving with matronly tact that their offspring were not tuned precisely to the same pitch, broke in with mutual invitations:—mine, all anxiety that the Stormonts should take a family dinner with us previous to Harry's departure for the continent; Lady Stormont, persisting that the said Harry would derive benefit from change of scene and objects, and insisting that we should dine with *them* the following day.

"If Mr. Wrottesley were afraid of the night air, perhaps he would accept a bed at Crowsden Grange."

I accepted it at once. Partly to annoy my sisters, who looked uneasy at the thought of

my obtaining a glimpse behind the tapestry of their lives: partly because, ill at ease with my conscience, I felt that new faces and strange follies might divert me from the contemplation of my own. The idea of four damsels paying their court to me at once, like dancing *odalisques* wooing some old pacha in a ballet, was far from disagreeable. After all, even a judge is allowed, amid the rigours of the bench, to recreate his senses by holding a posy in his hand.

To own the truth, moreover, the narrow dimensions of Hentsfield were such as to inspire one with wolfish restlessness. As to pacing any one of its rooms when unquiet in mind, a hop, step, and jump would have carried one right through the window. It was like playing at life to live in such a baby house, after the spacious corridors and noble proportions of Wrottesley. After a single round of the premises,—meadows, orchard, and flower garden,—I could scarcely restrain my wonder at having once regarded them as a domain. The weedy fish-pond

seemed to have shrunk into a barber's bason!

But even had I not felt "cabin'd, cribb'd, confined" by the contracted limits of a spot which I had never been enabled to invest with the sacredness of home, I should have been pleased with the prospect of a visit to the old Grange. Crowsden was a place that figured largely in pocket-book vignettes, and views of country-seats of the nobility and gentry; and whatever ambitious architect addressed the polite audiences of Royal Institutions, Literary Associations, or provincial Athenæums, on the subject of the domestic architecture of our ancestors, was sure to produce a ground-plan of Crowsden Grange, with a view of the southern or principal front tinted in bistre or sepia, till it looked like the frontispiece of one of Mrs. Radcliffe's romances. Now I had seen to satiety Gothic churches, Gothic castles, and Gothic halls (when shall we see a Gothic theatre, for which the style is so admirably calculated?) But the little sanctuary half hidden

at the extremity of an avenue of ancient beeches, like a Beguine's face under her coif, was the very thing to move the stagnancy of my comatose imagination.

I suspect, however, that if invited to a formal dinner-party at half-past six in the Baptistery at Florence, or the Golden Chamber at Augsburg, we should find it look like any other dining-room! Plush and plate are in the ascendant. The aiguillettes of clumsy footmen whisking in one's face, the cod's head and shoulders which the purblind old gentleman of the house *will* carve himself, albeit the fish-slice tremble in his hand like Fleury's lace ruffles vibrating in the gesticulation of a sentimental comedy,—are apt to divert our attention from groined ceilings or chimney-pieces calculated to put to shame that of the *Franc de Bruges*.

But as Sir Thomas's wine was not quite so well-seasoned as his house, probably because "my cousin Reginald" had drunk out the sherris-sack, and old canary of his ancestors, I entered the withdrawing-room after dinner seeing quite as clearly as before; and by all the

saints of the calendar, never was I more disgusted than by the flimsy vulgarity of every object contained within those venerable walls! I now saw where my mother and sisters had imbibed the miserable taste for tawdry furniture which had dressed out my old green room like a chimney-sweeper on May Day! But what was *that* mistake compared with the sacrilege which had covered the tables and *étagères* under the embayed windows (the corbeils of whose groinings grinned horrible a ghastly smile as they surveyed the rubbish) with trumperies in card-board and gilt-paper, Chinese carvings, and all the gimcracks of Birmingham *virtù!*

The grand old chimney-piece was hung round with paltry miniatures, like some colossal South Sea idol with shells and humming-birds in its ears. The lanceolated windows had paper transparencies in every pane!—

"You will perceive, Mr. Wrottesley," simpered Lady Stormont majestically from under her turban, "that we have contrived to make the old place look tolerably cheerful!"

Now that the harlequin's bat of fashion has begun to furbish up every Roman villa of Putney or Doric palace of Carlton Gardens with the richly carved moveables of the middle ages, *bahuts* with twisted columns, or ebony cupboards of plate, (with much the same discernment that places a verandah over the portico of an Irish Tusculum,) what sums of money would be paid by some modern decorator for the fine old fretted furniture of walnut wood, which Lady Stormont boasted of having sold to some country broker, as too cumbersome even for the lumber-room of Crowsden, to make way for her trumpery gilt chairs and sofas *à la Louis Quatorze!* I am not much of an antiquarian; but by Jove! it made my blood boil to see a family relic so desecrated as that remarkable house. A statue of Erasmus, or Chaucer, or ancient Gower, dressed out like Monsieur Chicard or Monsieur Tortillard of the Bal Mabille, would scarcely have been more frivolous and vexatious.

As there was a showy upright pianoforte in

the room, and a double-gilded double-actioned harp, I had no hope of escaping what is called "a little music;" which purports musical martyrdom lasting through the evening.

"Don't be afraid, Mr. Wrottesley," exclaimed the impish Rose, aside, on perceiving an involuntary spasm contract my face the moment her lady mother suggested to Louisa and Ellen, who constituted the family orchestra, that perhaps the Miss Powerscourts would like to hear the Polonaises sent them from Petersburgh by their cousin Reginald. "I took good care of both harp and piano before dinner, so as to defy even my sisters' skill to make music out of them. It is too seldom one sees a strange face or hears a new voice in this house, to give up the pleasure of chit-chat for what those who care to hear at all, can hear better elsewhere."

In reply to this rattle, I could not but own that I was not partial to chamber music.

"Perhaps you agree with me and my cousin Reginald," cried she, "that music is only pleasant when enjoyed as an accompaniment

and not an interruption to conversation;—a military band, for instance, at a *fête champêtre*, or the birds in a wood."

But by this time the fair musicians had discovered themselves to be at fault; though who could have mislaid the harpstring box, or what could be the cause which rendered dumb three notes of their beloved Broadwood, did not suggest itself to their apprehension. Ellen grew flushed and angry, accusing blundering housemaids and meddlesome footmen, while the soft eyed Louisa was almost moved to tears; both being eager that their dearest Dora and Emily should hear the prettiest Polonaises which had ever glided in serpentine measures since the *chef-d'œuvre* of Oginski!

"Since it seems we cannot have any music, my dears," noddled the painstaking old lady of the house, "what say you to a round game?"

A look of blank consternation followed,—as when, in cabinet council, the royal dissent is hinted to some ministerial measure.

"Why not propose *petits jeux* at once,

mamma?" cried the privileged Rose. "Remember that poor Mr. Wrottesley is only half recovered from the typhus fever! You might as well sit him down to backgammon with poor papa, as to commerce and nightcaps!"

And mamma, accustomed to understand things by halves, pointed to Sir Thomas, who was dozing in a corner, as a reason why this suggestion could not be complied with.

"I am afraid, my dear Lady Stormont," said my mother, "that, as there is no moon, instead of accepting your pleasant proposal, I must ask leave to ring for my carriage." An intimation not exactly tending to confirm my sisters' assertion, that the sociability of Hertfordshire was a far more neighbourly thing than the patriarchal hospitalities of my new county.

But it was not for me to find fault with an arrangement which left me to the undisturbed contemplation of the four beauties, whom it needed no great stretch of imagination to convert into the representatives of the four quarters of the globe: the mature Miss Stormont

figuring America, with her abundant rivers, tremendous mountains, and mines of precious metal; while the indolent Louisa, Circassian in every gesture, might have sat for the picture of Asia, and the dark eyed Ellen of the sultry fatherland of the Moor. But little Rose was Europe from top to toe—pretty, witty, wanton, wild;—the acme of civilization, yet having uncultured heaths and valleys in its very heart;—of which it was my business to discover whether they contained the craters of extinct volcanoes, or glaciers frozen from the very creation.

"Your sisters appear to have been much impressed by their visit to the North," observed Miss Stormont, in her usual didactic tone, the moment the carriage drove from the door.

"But for the melancholy occasion of the journey," added Louisa, with an air of pensive sympathy, "they would doubtless have greatly enjoyed their visit."

"But how came it, Mr. Wrottesley," broke in the perverse Rose, "that you never thought

of inviting them to your family mansion till you had one foot in the family vault?"

"Because I have never been permanently resident at Wrottesley Hall," said I. "It would have been almost insulting to invite an inhabitant of your smooth, trim, snug Hertfordshire, into a wilderness where the gravel walks are overgrown with groundsel, and the marble hall with green mould."

"Our smooth, trim, snug Hertfordshire, the county of citizens' boxes and bankers' villas!—Is not that what you want to express, Mr. Wrottesley?" cried Rose, laughing heartily, though not loud enough to waken the old gentleman snoozing in the corner with all the twitchings and whimperings of a dreamy hound.

"I might certainly venture to say it under this roof," I retorted, assuming a little spirit, "which probably harboured the Stormont family some centuries before the foundation stone was laid of Wrottesley Hall."

"But we are all dying to know," resumed Rose hastily, on seeing that her eldest sister

was preparing to let off one of the great guns of her erudition in the history of the building of Crowsden Grange, the share it had taken in the wars of the two roses, and the arrival from Normandy of the Lord of Ostremont,—corrupted by his English vassals into Stormont—in the time of William the Conqueror;—"we are all dying to know something about this incomparable Yorkshire brother and sister, whom you and Dora have fallen in love with?"

"Rose!" ejaculated her three sisters at once, in harmonious distances; to which the noddling old lady in the turban added, in a tone of tender remonstrance, "My *dear* Rose, how *can* you!"—

"You must tell me first," said I, by way of humouring the little damsel's impertinence, "the name of my sister's hero; which will afford me some clue to that of my heroine. But what makes you suppose that Dora is in love?"

"Because since her return from Yorkshire

she has grown so sententious and conceited, as to be no longer like the same person."

"And is sententiousness, then, a symptom of the tender passion?"

"Not always. My sister Mary is constitutionally sententious. It is on record that she squabbled with her nurse in the correctest English; and that her arguments in her leading strings would have borne parsing by Lindley Murray. But when a girl like Dora Powerscourt, who used to outrattle even *me*, takes to moralizing, be sure there is a hole in her heart! We *used* to accuse her of a *tendresse* for my cousin Reginald."—

"Rose, Rose, Rose!" again remonstrated her sisters.

"Why, is there any harm in it?" cried she, turning to each in her turn. "But since her return from Wrottesley—(what is it,—Park, Hall, or Place?)—she has never once mentioned his name!"

"And what name *has* she mentioned?"

"'Caroline!' There is a Caroline, it seems,

residing in the neighbourhood of your house, who, from the pains you took to prevent your family seeing her, by abstaining from all invitations to hers and leaving your sisters not a single day for a visit, is clearly the lady of your thoughts! While, by Dora's mysterious way of talking about 'Caroline's brother,' and 'Adela's brother,' (Caroline and Adela being sisters) we conclude that the great unknown is the Hamlet who is likely to make our poor Ophelia at Hentsfield twine chickweed in her hair."

"When you know my sister better," pleaded Miss Stormont, with magisterial moderation, "you will learn how little value is to be set on wild conjectures!"

"Don't believe them, Mr. Wrottesley!" retorted the imp, folding her little hands together with an air of determination. "You will *never* know me better than now! Rattlepates like myself may be read through and through in a day."

"A great poet has told us, however, that

There is no woman where there's no reserve,"

said I, intending to pique her, as one fillips the nose of a favourite Italian greyhound to make it more playful.

"No *woman*, perhaps," she retorted; "but an immense deal of *girl!* I don't want to be a woman, Mr. Wrottesley, till one or two of my sisters have become wives."

Ellen, who had a tinge of Spanish jealousy in her disposition, as well as of Spanish beauty in her face, had stalked dignifiedly off to bed, on finding the spoiled child of the family bent upon monopolizing the conversation. But Miss Stormont now cried "Shame!" and the blushing Louisa begged for mercy. Even the giddy prateapace seemed conscious that she had gone too far; and by way of giving a new turn to the conversation, took from the stand where it was blinking, neither asleep nor awake, Lady Stormont's favourite pink cockatoo; and having roused the poor bird by a series of playful persecutions, made it go through a variety of antics which no one but herself could have taught, and no one more than herself enjoyed.

I am sadly afraid that the fair sad face of

Caroline Roxborough, which was apt to be the last object that floated before my eyes ere they closed in sleep, was a little eclipsed that night by an elf-like pigmy that came dancing before them,—now merrily enshrined

Under the blossom that hangs on the bough;

now attired in the goat-skin suit of Robinson Crusoe, walking tripsomely by my side, with a pink cockatoo on its shoulder; while I vainly endeavoured to exorcise the mischievous sprite by the lay of Theresa Krones, in the Bauer als Millionnär:

Brüderlein fein—Brüderlein fein—
Willſt du nicht ſo kindiſch ſeyn!—

CHAPTER IV.

Jack Cade.—It was never merry time in England since gentlemen came up.

George.—O, miserable age! Virtue is not regarded in handicraftsmen!

SHAKSPEARE.

I FORGET whether I confided to the reader that one of my motives for accepting the invitation to Crowsden, was the opportunity it afforded of escaping from maternal and sororial *surveillance*, so as to make the best of my way to Wilsbury instead of returning directly home.

Of course, I hinted nothing on the subject to the Stormonts; but having resisted their united attempts to prolong my visit, the following morning, after breakfast, I stopped short at Berkhampstead, and leaving there my mother's

coachman and horses till my return, took posters to the farm. The note I had so trustfully despatched, had been enclosed back to me by Andrew in a blank cover, so that I was certain he was at home; and I hoped to soften his heart towards me by the sight of my wasted limbs and languid countenance. It was only right he should know that he had not suffered alone.

This time, if I did not draw up at the gate of the farm, it was not from false shame of my consequence, but for fear of being refused admittance. I stole in like a thief in the night; and, finding no one in the kitchen, (which the family called the house) made my way straight into the well-known parlour. But even that was deserted! The old grandmother's chair was empty, with its face turned towards the wall; and from a work-basket lying on the table full of seams of mourning, I inferred that the poor old lady was no longer of this world.—In the window hung the blind bullfinch's cage,—dusty, and lacking its usual canopy of the weeds that birds delight in. But the disconsolate bird came

hopping towards the sound of footsteps, as though neglect had increased its tameness.

I was puzzled which way to direct my steps. There did not seem to be a creature in the house; and even had I known at what part of the farm old Grove and his son were engaged, my strength would not have served me to reach them.

Before I gave up the point, however, I determined to proceed to Andrew's room; and having made my way up the naked creaking stairs, knocked at the well-remembered door. All sounded hollow within. The door was locked, and the key removed. But the noise I made had the good effect of bringing forth a strange head from an opposite door.—I say strange; for how was I to recognize in a lean, sallow woman, attired in all the severity of bombazine up to the throat, the laughing, bright-eyed Bessie of two years before!

Apparently, I was as hard to recognize as herself;—for she addressed me as a housebreaker.

"You do not remember me, Miss Grove,"

said I, a little humbled. "I came here in hopes of finding my friend Andrew. I was not aware of the loss your family appears to have sustained."

"Mr. Wrottesley!" exclaimed the poor soul, in astonished recognition. But even when I was known, there was no longer a trace of the obsequious deference which had forestalled my wishes and words at my last visit. I "stepped down" indeed, at her desire; poor Bessie closely following, as if still uncertain concerning my burglarious intentions. But when we reached the ground-floor, she did not ask me to "step *in*" to the parlour; but placed a chair for me beside the kitchen fire, which was swept up and trimmed; as if, although so early in the afternoon, its business for the day was over.

"We have never been into that room, Sir," said she in a voice as little resembling her own as the face she partially averted from me to hide her tears while pointing to the parlour door, "since the day of father's funeral."

"Your *father*!" cried I, starting up in unaffected amazement. "You do not mean to say,

my dear Miss Grove, that you have lost your worthy father?"

"Why for whom else, Sir, do you suppose I'm wearing this black gown?" said Bessie, in the matter of fact phraseology of her brother.

"I fancied you had recently lost your grandmother."

"More than three months ago, Sir. Poor Andrew was in mourning for her (in his heart as well as on his shoulders, for she'd been a true friend to *him*!) at the time of his college misfortunes."

"But Farmer Grove,—so hale and hearty as he was when I last saw him!"—

"Trouble will break down the strongest of us, Mr. Wrottesley, as the lightning strikes the stoutest tree!"

"He had met with other afflictions, then, previous to—"

"No, Sir! Put that out of your head. Don't let your conscience cling to *that* for comfort. It was the mortification of my brother's undeserved disgrace that killed him,—neither more

nor less. He never held up his head afterwards, Mr. Wrottesley,—he never held up his head again!"—

"And Andrew!" cried I, more abashed in presence of this untutored farmer's daughter than if she were a princess of the blood. "Where is Andrew? I expected to find him here. He wrote to me, that is," I continued, lowering my voice and my eyes, "his handwriting reached me from this place, some days ago."

"Yes, Sir.—On the day of father's funeral, I remember your letter being put into his hand. I remember his giving back another to your servant. But when we asked him what you had written about, he shook his head, saying, 'only to insult me further.'"

"But, indeed, I had no intention of insulting or vexing him!" cried I, warming at the imputation. "And if I knew where he was to be found at this moment—"

"It is more than I can tell you, Mr. Wrottesley," interrupted Bessie, a little mollified by the earnestness of my manner. "He left us,

Sir, the day after the funeral: and Bella, who's sometimes half beside herself, has got it running in her head that my poor brother will never darken our threshold again!"

"Did he leave you no address, then?"

"He told us he was going to town to my brother's; and that we should hear from him in a day or two. But we have not yet heard; and a letter from my sister-in-law to-day, said nothing of his arrival."

"This is strange indeed!" cried I, alarmed in my turn. "Was Andrew in low spirits,—I mean in a desponding way,—at the moment he left you?"

"My brother is never in what can be called low spirits, Sir. But he was grave,—very grave. How could he be otherwise, returning from his father's funeral,—a father lost, too, under such circumstances!"

"But he did not leave an impression on your mind," said I, avoiding a subject so afflicting, "that—that—he was not to be trusted with the care of his own life?"

"Andrew not to be trusted with the care of

any thing on this 'varsal earth!" cried the plain-spoken Bessie, not altogether understanding what delicacy forbad me to express too clearly. But now that Andrew was gone, what had delicacy of mind to do at Wilsbury!—

"I would say that you have no fear," I commenced firmly,—(but for my life I could not pronounce the word suicide!)—"that he is likely to do any thing desperate?"

"Yes, very desperate!" replied the sorrowful young woman, tears rising into her hollow eyes. "As he quitted this room, Sir, he said to me and Bella with a look I shall never forget, 'Before you hear of me again, girls, my fate will be decided.'"

To me, this expression did not convey so lugubrious an idea as to his sister. Acquainted with the firm mind and pious spirit of Andrew, I entertained little doubt that he had projected some new career, and was on the eve of instalment.

"Do you mean, Sir," cried the startled Bessie, when I communicated my opinion, "that you think he has gone for a soldier?"

"*A soldier!*" I repeated, scarcely restraining a smile at the notion of the meek reserved Andrew, in battle array. "You forget that, with your brother's superior abilities, various openings present themselves certain to lead to fortune and fame."

"Ay! his superior abilities—that was the rock, as poor father said on his death bed, on which we all split!—We were always talking of Andrew's abilities, which were a snare laid for our pride!—We wanted him to be more and greater than his people had ever been before him.—And see, Sir, in what all has ended!"

"Pardon me," said I. "You must not so wrong your brother as connect with his superiority of talent any thing that occurred at college."

"Mr. Wrottesley, he should never have gone to college! As father said in his last moments, if he'd been looking after his ploughmen in Wilsbury Mead, this never would have happened, and we might still have held up our heads."

"But when you are solemnly assured," cried I, almost angrily, "that in all that took place,

Andrew was wholly blameless—that the whole fault was my own."

"You are very good to say so, Sir. But as if you,—his friend,—his old playfellow,—would have done him such an injury!"—

"Unintentionally, God knows! But I *did* it! Had I been aware of your poor father's opinion concerning this unhappy affair, I would have come here and explained it to the old man on my knees."

"It is too late, now!" faltered Bessie, with a glance from the vacant oaken settle to the farmer's old fowling-piece on the gun-rack above, which no one would probably ever more take down. "But you can scarce wonder, Sir, at my father's feelings.—Just as we were looking forward to Andrew's arrival, an honour and a credit to the family—just as all our neighbours were rejoicing with us at the prospect of the son of a family established in this parish for hundreds and hundreds of years, having worked his way to orders, seated by our fireside,—for such a shame to fall upon us as his rustication!

—Sent away from college, Sir, like a servant turned off without a character!"

"But surely when it was explained to those prying neighbours that your brother was the victim of an infamous plot—"

"Of what use to tell them so? Families always make the best of their own story. Besides our neighbours are folks of our own condition in life, who understand little about university matters;—and it would have been useless our arguing against a fact so notorious as that Andrew Grove was a disgraced man!"

"This is enough to drive one mad!" cried I, at length overmastered by my irritation. And marvellous indeed appeared to me at that moment the pertinacity of Andrew in declining the promise of Rainham, which would have extricated him from such a race of block-heads.

"At all events," said I, having now learned the worst, "you can furnish me with your married brother's address in London, that I may make inquiries after Andrew?"

The stupid woman hesitated.

"I am not sure, Sir," said she, "but I may be doing my brother an injury by affording you the means of renewing an acquaintance which has been his ruin."

"In that case," I rejoined, "I shall have to apply to the police, for the means of finding him out."

To her simple country ear, the mere mention of the police appeared a threat; and without further hesitation, she took from a needle-case, which she carried in her pocket, a discoloured printed card, bearing the address of "Elias Grove, Leather Dresser, Bark's Buildings, Dowgate Hill."

"Maybe you have never been so far in the city, Sir?" said she, on seeing me examine the card with a puzzled air. "But I beg pardon," she continued, her colour suddenly rising as some unwonted stir in the farm-yard recalled her to herself; "I'm expecting my sister Bella home from Hertford, where she drove this morning in the chaise, to consult with father's lawyer (about family business, which Andrew's

sudden departure has left on our hands). My sister has a hasty temper, Mr. Wrottesley.—My sister was fondly attached to her father; and on seeing you, might perhaps say things you would scarce be able to bear."

The hint sufficed. I remembered of old, the plain speaking of Isabella Grove, exhibiting all her brother's candour, unmitigated by his sensitiveness of feeling. Unwilling, therefore, to provoke an attack which nothing would have induced me to parry, I accepted poor Bessie's hint, took as courteous a leave as she would accept, and quitted Wilsbury for ever.

As I hastily traversed the farm-yard, with my hat pulled over my eyes, I could not but contrast the present stillness and deadness of the place with the active cheerful spirit of industry which so delighted me on my visit from Eagle House. Was this my doing? *All* could not be the natural result of the course of time? Alas! I could not deceive myself!—But for my execrable folly, those two unhappy sisters had not now been weeping over their mourning gowns in a desecrated home.

My drive back to Hentsfield was as cheerless as remorse and a black frost could make it: one of those bitter frosts which sometimes breathe into the gentle face of April, like slander into that of beauty, till all is prematurely withered. Even poor little Hentsfield, whose flower garden I had left so bright with spring flowers and almond blossoms the preceding day, looked blighted and dreary. So much the better. The announcement I had to make would find every thing in unison.

Within the house, however, there prevailed a very different influence from the atmosphere which had cut off the almond blossoms and caused the crocuses to shut up their golden globes. My sisters were in the highest spirits; and my mother sat smiling over her favourite volume of Sturm's "Reflections," with her salts' bottle in her hand—to her the highest state of beatitude. For during the five intervening hours between my leaving Crowsden and reaching home, letters had been exchanged between the two families:—on the part of the Stormonts, to accept an invitation to dinner,

accompanied by a *billet* anything but *doux*, from Ellen to her friend Emily, complaining that "Rose, with her usual contempt of decorum, had commenced a most outrageous flirtation with Mr. Wrottesley; while her lady mother sat by without an attempt at interference!" and on the part of my sister, to beg for a copy of the Polonaises which had missed fire the preceding night; with a postscript entreaty that Rose might be left to her devices—"Anything my dear, so that we keep him in Herts!"

These manœuvres I discovered, long afterwards, through the treachery of Rose. All I noticed at the moment was that, had I been the Prodigal Son, I could not have been more warmly welcomed.

"Where have you been since you left Crowsden, my dear Harry," cried my mother, in a tone of tender anxiety; "I was getting quite frightened!"

"Paying visits, mother,—visits to old friends."

"Not to Barming, I hope! Not to the Whichcotes?" exclaimed my two sisters in succession.

"The Whichcotes, I hold to be old *enemies*," said I, endeavouring so speak cheerfully. "But you must learn to do without me, young ladies, if you please; for to-morrow, I am obliged to start for town."

"For town?—Impossible!—At all events, only for a day, and to return again as soon as possible?"—

"No—for good; to hasten my preparations for going abroad."

"No, no, no, no!" Not one of them would hear of it. "I was not half recovered. Besides, I had promised—"

"To spend a week with you at Hentsfield," said I; "which expired the day before yesterday."

"*Have* we been back a week!" was my mother's hearty ejaculation,—implying a compliment which either I or Hentsfield was at liberty to appropriate.

"I must start early to-morrow," I persisted, seeing them all aghast. "I have business of some urgency in town."

"You really mean to go then!" said Emily,

all but wringing her hands. "What *shall* we say to the Stormonts!"

"They will fancy we have again been making fools of them," sighed Dora.

"Don't talk as if you cared for my company only to farm it out to the Stormonts," I retorted with some bitterness. "Surely you are not more accountable to *them* for my comings and goings, than they to *you* for those of their much-quoted cousin Reginald!"

The blow struck home. Not a syllable more was uttered throughout the evening, concerning our engagements to Crowsden Grange. In that room, from whence I had been so often banished by their caprices,—in that room, in which, when any thing pleasant was going on, I used to be voted a nuisance,—an appeal to my tenderness would have been out of place. Far wiser to keep on the best of terms with me, by affecting the best of humours.

On the morrow, however, sorely against my will, a few tears *did* infuse themselves into our leave-taking. Dora and Emily were too panic-struck to say much. But a presentiment which

the long absence from England I meditated insensibly introduced into my mind, that I might never see my mother's face again,—added to the nervous qualms produced by a sleepless night, haunted by reminiscences of the scene of the preceding day,—induced me to return from the carriage-door into the hall, to raise her hand once more to my lips. A stupid thing to do; for my unwonted effusion of sensibility caused the old lady to do what my sisters called "give way to her feelings;" and brought her, for the second time in her life, almost to the verge of hysterics!

But the moment I lost sight of Hentsfield, I lost sight of my fears.

Let any man, by the way, who has been enduring for a couple of months the living death of a typhus fever, and spending another in the bosom of far from the pleasantest family in the world, arrive in London on a spring day, just when the violets are beginning to be hawked about the streets, and carts of forced sweetbriar, hyacinths, Persian lilacs, and cinnerarias, to jolt from door to door,—when the

beau monde, terrified by the approach of Easter like an old beau by the prospect of his end, indulges in undue skittishness to make the most of its time,—let him traverse St. James's Street, with its crowded chatty club-windows, set up his rest, as I did, at the "Clarendon," not quite certain whether he have strength to attempt the Opera and sun himself in its galaxy of gas and beauty,—and he will understand the sensations (I was very near calling them feelings) which signalised the visit in question.

I did *not* go to the Opera. I did not even despatch a messenger to Roxborough's chambers to apprise him of my whereabout; determined to remain wholly my own master till I had made out something concerning my poor friend Andrew.

Having caused my sofa to be drawn close to the fire,—for recent illness and a chilly spring evening rendered acceptable both fire and sofa,—I requested to be denied to all applicants, as "not at home;" as if satisfied that the wings of all the winds would carry abroad the news of my

arrival; and with the evening paper disregarded in my hand, I set about my favourite occupation of Castle-building.

Another week, and Wrottesley Wrottesley and his native land would have had a few words and parted. *That* much was certain. *That* much required no exercise of my boss of constructiveness. The query was, when should I return? For how many months, or years, or tens of years, was I to make preparation? So much had I exceeded my means, that my only chance of eventually arriving at Wrottesley Hall with an undiminished rent-roll, to commence such a course of life as would do honour to its antecedents—(I do not mean by re-modelling and re-furnishing the place, for that had long been out of the question, but simply to live in it as others had done before me)—was by a residence abroad of some years' duration.

Every body knows that, if hundreds of thousands may be expended on the continent with much pleasure and some profit, an income which passes for poverty in England will procure the luxuries of life in other lands, where

money is not the cheapest thing going. Satisfied, therefore, that I need not enter La Trappe because unable to affect rivalship with Russian Princes, the prospect of my foreign expedition was far from unpleasing.

Perhaps during my long absence, the lanky boy of other days might become effaced from the too tenacious memory of Caroline Roxborough; and a polished traveller be permitted to supply his place. No fear of interference in the interim from the renewed courtship of Henry Temple. His college engagements would keep him to his post. For he was on the point of obtaining a fellowship; after which, it would be too much his interest to remain single for the chance of a college living, to admit of his brother's even inviting him to the Rectory, in direct opposition to the wishes of Roxborough Elms.

If forced therefore to rnounce my ambition of gathering honours in the Senate and taking a prominent part in London life, I might at least look forward to being established half a year later in my fine old place;—refined in

person, mind, and manners by having mixed extensively with the world; an experienced *dilettante*,—a man of taste, a George IV. on a small scale,—fastidious, graceful, and condescending.

All this, to use a favourite French idiom, smiled at me. My Cambridge debts were paid. I had plenty of ready money. My strength would rapidly return; and "the world was all before me, where to choose"—*not* my place of rest,—for of rest I was just then thoroughly weary; but a place, whose atmosphere and inhabitants were too light for my time to hang heavy.

All I wished was a partial reconciliation and friendly parting with Andrew, previous to my departure. If *his* prospects were tolerably promising, I should leave England content.

CHAPTER V.

Et moi aussi, j'ai été déchiré par les épines de ce désert; et j'y laisse chaque jour, une partie de ma dépouille

CHATEAUBRIAND.

NEXT morning was the first I ever opened my eyes in London, feeling thoroughly alone; no human being cognizant of my presence,—no human being in all that mighty metropolis caring whether I were dead or alive.

On such occasions, it is generally the person one likes best to whom one's wounded spirit reverts for comfort. But whether it were the image of Caroline Roxborough that flitted through my mind, or of old Nicholls, or my mother, or little Rose Stormont, with her pink cockatoo on her shoulder, matters little to the

reader. Suffice it that immediately after breakfasting on the unctuous cockneyisms called muffins, the indigestion produced by which is enough to damp the noblest of intentions, I set off under the guidance of one of those practical geographers called hackney-coachmen, in search of the *terra incognita* inhabited by the brothers Grove.

Dowgate Hill, with its stately Leather-sellers' Hall, was easy to be found. The adjacent *cul-de-sac*, scarcely admitting the turning of a truck within its precincts, indicated by the printed address, I judged it wiser to attempt on foot. It was little better than a blind alley:—blind, indeed!—for like the falls in Rogers's Jacqueline,

There 'twas night at noon of day.

At two of the afternoon, at least, when I visited the spot, the gas was already flaring in its warehouses.

And of warehouses alone, it seemed composed. The ground-floor towards the street consisted of yawning roughly-paved gulphs, piled to their fire-proof iron ceilings with goods,

littered with straw, and smelling of pitch and cart-rope; and unless the families said to inhabit Bark's Buildings were hoisted up by the crane attached to each several house, to some invisible tenement near the sky, impossible to guess where they abided.

After counting these warehouses from No. 1 at the corner, I addressed myself to a mechanic, who was assisting to load a porter's knot before the number indicated by my direction card,—a sulky looking chap in a leathern apron, with a badger's-skin cap upon his head,—to inquire whether the premises from which he emerged were those of Mr. Elias Grove.

All he vouchsafed in reply, without removing his cap, or offering any other token of courtesy, was a familiar nod. But a moment afterwards, afraid perhaps that he might be affronting a customer, he informed me that Elias Grove was his name.

"Perhaps, then, you will have the goodness to inform me, Sir," said I, "where your brother Andrew is to be found?"

"That depends upon who asks it!" replied

my surly respondent. "If a friend is wanting him, Andrew's where he ought to be, under my roof. But if e'er a one of those confounded Cambridge prigs should come inquiring, the rough side of my door and my tongue's the best he'd need to look for!"

This was plain-speaking; E. G. did ample honour to his race!—

"I trust you will learn to reckon me among Andrew's friends!" said I. "And since he is with you, if you will at once enable me to see him, he will confirm my assertion."

This was boldly said; for I was far from certain that Andrew might not turn his back upon me at once. But my first object was to secure an interview.

"Enable you to see him, my man? That's sooner said than done!" replied Elias, with thorough unconcern. "Andrew's visiting o' me, it's true. But he's in a hurry to leave my place every morning;" (and who could wonder —such a place as it was!) "To-day, he was off into the Borough as soon as 'twas light."

"And when do you expect him back again?"

"That's neither here nor there,—though more, may be, than you've any business to ask."

"I have a message to him, Sir," said I, "from his sister Bessie, at Wilsbury."

"My sister Bessie?—Then I humbly ask your pardon, Sir, for having kept you talking all this while in the street!" cried the leather-dresser, instantly humanized, and hastening to remove his fur cap. "I judged you were on quite another errand. Pray step this way, Sir!"

And he began marshalling me through the warehouse, groping his way through heaps of loose straw, piles of skins, and bales of goods, towards the back of the premises; where a staircase worthy of a stable loft, ran up beside the unplastered wall towards the upper stories.

"I need not intrude upon your family, Mr. Grove, since Andrew is from home," said I. "If you will give me leave, I will call another

time, when there may be more chance of finding him."

Having foreseen the probability that on my reaching the city, Andrew might be abroad in that great metropolis whose sights and glories were so new to his eyes, I had provided myself with a letter of explanation, entreating (almost humbly) an interview before I left England for years. And this letter I proposed to leave with his brother.

The sort of way in which "he of the badger-skin cap," (as G. P. R. James would call him,) turned and re-turned it in his hands, like a country footman receiving a message from his master,—examining the hand-writing and seal, and then suspiciously reverting to my face again, as if mistrusting me for an impostor,—was hardly to be borne. Raising my hat to him, though he did not deign to acknowledge the courtesy by so much as the original nod, I made off to my hackney-coach, and bad the driver retrace his way to the west end.

Before I had jangled through many streets,

however, it occurred to me that, being in the heart of the city, I might seize the opportunity to proceed to the Heralds' College; which, ever since my change of name, I had undertaken to visit, in order to verify the pedigree of the Wrottesley family, carried out by my desire, collaterally, so as to include my father and myself—at the time that wild visions of a coronet mingled with my Castles in the Air.

I was accordingly rattled up hill and down, through lanes that would have put to shame the back slums of Cambridge, and where, every now and then, I expected to stumble upon the Wynd inhabited by John Christie and his wife of the Fortunes of Nigel; till I reached the old pile on St. Benett's Hill, once the ancient mansion of the Earls of Derby, and still adorned with a variety of Stanley cognizances, including the quaint escutcheon of the Lords of Man; when lo! as I sat deliberating before the gateway whether to demand a private audience of Sir Isaac, or proceed at once to the office, my

name was vociferated by a voice that seemed familiar, and was qualified to outroar the rumbling drays of the city.

"Why, Wrottesley, my lad," cried Archdeacon Roxborough, "what in the name of all that's immoral brings you to Doctors' Commons? A licence, pray,—or a divorce?—To marry, or *un*marry! *That's* the question!"

"My business here, my dear Archdeacon," cried I, "is that of a bride, rather than a bridegroom, for it regards a change of name."

"Ay, ay! I forgot you had been Wrottesley-fied since I saw you. Well! you were well paid for your trouble. I'd call myself Archdeacon Sheepshanks, or Dean Flimflam, for half the money. *My* errand with the long robe (which I have just slurred over) is to procure a special license for a noble lord said to be specially licentious. But I'm starting back to Pall Mall, and should manage to be in time for a book-sale I want to attend, if your griffins and wyverns are not impatient, and you'll be kind enough to give me a lift."

"Number 108 and its fare are quite at your service," said I, not caring he should suppose me to attach the least importance to pedigrees or quarterings. And in a moment, the clattering steps were let down, and in pushed the wheezing monster, who resembled an asthma smothered in a feather bed.

"And so you've been playing out the play with a vengeance at Trinity?" cried he, with his usual familiar vulgarity. "A good thing for you, my boy, that your bread was earned for you. It requires a double allowance of emery and sand-paper, I can tell you, to scrub off such a blot as you have incurred. The only friends of mine who ever had the luck to be rusticated, are now expiating their sins,—one, as a veterinary surgeon at some settlement in Australia; t'other, as assistant clerk of the records in the most unhealthy of the Leeward Islands! A pleasant look-out for them;—but they could not have managed to make their way, rough or smooth, at home!"

"You do not seem to understand, my dear

Sir, that I took my name off the books," said I.

"Ay, ay; we all know what *that* means! Liddlesdale took *his* name off the books—the day after stuffing an effigy of the Master of Trinity, and turning it loose, riding hind side before, on a jackass, into Trinity Gardens!"

"My offences were of a somewhat less outrageous character. But tell me, how long have you been in town?"

"Long enough to write my name for my old friend, His Majesty,—and leave a card on my old friend, His Solemnity, Sir Robert Hawley.—"

Till that moment, it had never recurred to me that my guardian must have left Yorkshire for the meeting of Parliament, at the very moment of my starting.

"And engaged myself," resumed the Archdeacon, "to take a house-dinner at the Alfred with our friend, Charley—"

"Charley Roxborough take a house-dinner any where but at White's?" cried I.

"That we may get off early to the play, and

hear Kitty Stephens warble her wood-notes wild in Guy Mannering."

"Charley Roxborough listen to any warbling save that of the Opera?" I again exclaimed, in amazement.

"Don't find fault with him for derogating in favour of a country cousin," retorted the Archdeacon, laughing. "Charley and I have family business to talk over; and he perhaps thinks that I shall hang less heavy on his hands at a club whose members are *all* country cousins, and at a home-brewed theatre which his ineffables would scorn to enter, than by chopping together at Stevens's. But I tell you what, Wrottesley: we'll both dine with *you* to-morrow! You shall give us a *bisque d'écrevisses,* some mullets *en papillote,* a fore-quarter of lamb and asparagus, a pullet or ducklings, plovers' eggs, and a *fondu!* Not a thing more; and if Jacquier's wine be half as good as his predecessor's, I warrant we shan't be in any haste to go and hear Ronzi."

All this was mighty provoking! I had been in hopes of keeping my residence in town a secret,

till I had secured an interview with Andrew Grove, and prepared every thing for my departure for the continent; aware, by old experience, that the moment Charles Roxborough found me out, and invaded my domicile, he would become the cuckoo of the nest.

"I am almost afraid, Archdeacon, that I have an engagement for to-morrow," said I, scarcely venturing the announcement.

"Have you? Then it shall be the next day! I've got a week's holidays in town, and mean to enjoy them like a school-boy. By the way, my dear Wrottesley,—as I hear you managed to inveigle all sorts of straight-laced Puritans into your Cambridge spree, why wasn't that demure dog Henry Temple of the party?—You'd have done our family some good, Sir, by having *his* gown stripped off his shoulders."

"Do you suppose, then, that Miss Roxborough has still any intention in his favour?" said I, uneasily enough.

"What her *intentions* may be, I can't pretend to guess. None at all, if she's half the wise girl I take her for! For which of us,

even the most consistent, ever fulfils his intentions?—Never saw a man take a long aim yet, that he didn't miss fire! But intentions or no, 'tis plain that poor Car is fretting herself to fiddlestrings after her Parson Meanwell. You can't have seen her when you were last in Yorkshire, or you'd have noticed how plaguily she was altered!"

"I was in no house but my own and Sir Robert's. When Miss Roxborough visited my family at Wrottesley Hall, she excused her sister as suffering from a cold."

"Ay! a cold is a patent name for all ailments which doctors don't understand, and patients are unwilling to explain."

"You think her seriously ill, then?"

"Painfully, at all events. But girls of nineteen seldom die of love, or catarrhs. It is those who cough or sigh in second childhood to whom the disorder is fatal. Poor Car's blue devils will be exorcised by the bustle of her sister's wedding."

"Her sister's wedding? This is news indeed! I heard nothing of it in Yorkshire!"

"It has been settled within these few days. To say the truth, 'tis that which brings me up to town. As my pretty cousin's trustee, I choose to see her twenty thousand pounds properly settled on her; for it strikes me that neither Charley nor Lord Fortrose are altogether to be trusted."

"She marries Fortrose, then?"

"Whom else was she likely to marry? You and he are the only young men who have been allowed to set foot in Roxborough Elms since that unlucky affair of Henry Temple: when Sir Gratian and his son swore that the girls should never speak to a man again, till his pedigree had been warranted like a hunter's, and his rent-roll taxed like an attorney's bill!"

"Fortrose is not a bad fellow," said I, musingly.

"Negative praise, my dear Wrottesley! But you would have done fairer justice to your friend by saying that there is the making of a good fellow in him if he could be kept apart from Charley Roxborough."

"Which, if he marry his sister, is never likely to be the case."

"I don't know. Adela may have a will of her own; and Charley has been a bitter bad brother. I expect that Fortrose will be made to understand that two members of the Roxborough family at Fortrose Castle must suffice him; and both of the female gender."

"Is poor Car, then, to reside with her sister?"

"Where else?—The Elms are advertised to be let for a term of years."

"And what is to become of Sir Gratian?"

"*A la grâce de Dieu! He* fancies that he is to reside with his son, or near his son, and lead a life of pleasure about town—(poor old soul!)—for which he is about as fit, as one of his Russian pointers for a lady's lap-dog."

"I should think it would suit Charley quite as little to have such an appendage tacked to his establishment."

"At present, of course, young Hopeful bids fair,—because harassed by debts which can only

be paid off by a good understanding with his father and Fortrose. But Charley is a fellow who'd make every one belonging to him sleep on straw, that *he* might sleep on eider-down; and I suspect the poor old fellow's best chance of a chimney-corner for the rest of his days, is at the Archdeaconry. I owe Sir Gratian many a bottle of good wine and haunch of good venison; and the best I have shall always be at his call."

I believed him; for in spite of the sensuality so much at odds with the colour of his cloth, which at times rendered the jovial humour of the Archdeacon disgusting, there was a spice of gentle blood in his coarseness; and, better still, a spice of Christian feeling at the bottom of his worldliness, which gave him the advantage over many a man more precise.

As we neared Pall Mall, (where the single palace then existing has since been replaced by hundreds) I could not forbear expressing a little surprise at the object of his visit.

"I scarcely fancied you the man, Mr. Arch-

deacon," said I, "to invest much capital in books!"

"And you did me justice!" he rejoined, in any thing but a tone of displeasure. "Since I came to man's, or rather to Archdeacon's estate, I have bought nothing beyond the Annual Register, to keep up my notions of how the world is wagging; and the Sporting Calendar, to keep Charley out of mischief when he comes to visit me at York. I inherited from my predecessor a lot of far sounder divinity than I should find were I to buy up all Hatchard's shop; and with that, and Shakespeare, and Don Quixote, 'twould be hard if a man couldn't get through a life, of which sleeping takes up a third, and his duties (among which I reckon eating and drinking) another."

"You are going to make purchases for a friend, then?" said I, unable to reconcile this frank avowal with his projects for the day.

"Buy books on commission? Not I! As soon dodge with a man's caprices, by choosing him a horse or a wife. No, no! My business at

book-sales is not as a chapman! The truth is, my dear Wrottesley, that visiting London seldom, and Cambridge never, I have rarely an opportunity of stumbling against my college chums; and where am I so likely to find the shovel-hats collected, as at a book-sale? I go in, and turn over the leaves of a 'Dugdale,' examining the margin and edges with the air of a man who knows what he's about; but before the business of the day is over, generally hit upon half-a-dozen old cronies far more acceptable to me than old books. But we're setting about a University club, Sir, which will be a pleasanter thing, and in the end a cheaper; for the best half of many a poor parson's stipend gets locked up in his book-case! But, by Jove! here we are!"

"And the sale over!" said I, examining the throng which was jostling out of the sale-rooms.

"Ay, ay! but there are half-a-dozen faces yonder which I must get a nearer sight of. Good bye, my dear Sir.—At seven to-morrow, Charley and I are your men."

I had rather they would have been somebody else's. But there was no remedy; and as little chance for a man even so little known as myself, to keep secret his arrival in town. By merely going to take an ice at Gunter's, for instance, to clear the city smoke from my palate, I found my arm hooked into that of Lord Hampden; who, having shaved the thing as close as myself at Cambridge, and been, as he informed me, "blown to shivers on the occasion by the discharge of his governor's great guns," now constituted an additional spangle or additional globule of mud (according to the reader's code and creed), in the admixture of mud and spangles called fashionable life. I derived, however, some solace from the encounter. Hampden being established with his family in London, from mere contrariety affected to envy my continental expedition. And most men like to be envied.

"Not but that London was pleasant enough just then," he said. "They had the steeple-chase for Easter week. Meanwhile, the opera was capital; the play at Graham's higher than

ever. And this week," added he, "I have a couple of balls a night."

I expressed myself with suitable disgust with respect to balls;—I mean disgust suitable to the principles professed by the Roxborough school.

"And are you really young enough to go to balls, my dear Hampden?" said I, with a pitying glance at his beardless chin, though not a shade of whiskers garnished my own.

"Better inquire whether we are either of us *old* enough!" said he, frankly. "I can tell you I have but little chance of a waltz with Lady Jane or Miss C., when some of the fellows you just now called parchment-faced, in White's window, appear at the starting-post."

"*Those* old fellows dance?"

"Old fellows of five-and-thirty? Certainly! Come to Almack's to-night, and you will see."

As my only chance of obtaining a ticket was through Charles Roxborough, to whom I would far sooner have pleaded a desire to go to an execution, I still pleaded that "I did not pretend to make a monkey of myself. *I* was not a lady's man."

"Ay, ay! all that did very well at Cambridge," cried Hampden, shrugging his shoulders; "but it is out of place here. A captain of dragoons, quartered among the bogs or the moors, is privileged to prefer cigars and whisky-punch to lemonade. But depend upon it the man who in London pretends to despise the fêtes of D— House or Lady J—, does so because he has no chance of admittance."

"Charley Roxborough would obtain me admittance to either, if I cared to ask him," said I, inexpressibly nettled; more particularly because the nods and bows of recognition bestowed upon my companion as we sauntered along Pall Mall, and more particularly the number of hands kissed to him from a variety of brilliant equipages, put me sadly out of conceit of my forlorn condition in the busy throng.

"I am not so sure of that!" replied Hampden, coolly. "Roxborough is a man generally received; but he is far from popular. In the jockey set his opinions are picked up like pearls and diamonds, for the dirty reason that

every one hopes to make a market of them. But every one mistrusts him. His head is too cool and his heart too cold to make friends; and were he to smash to-morrow, none but his creditors would care a hang!"

This was so much my own opinion, that I was not hypocrite enough to gainsay it.

"A man like Roxborough," pursued Hampden, "who makes a regular trade of the turf, is only a better sort of leg; and doings of his have come to my knowledge, which, if done by one's coachman, would have compelled one to discharge the fellow without a character."

"Roxborough is my friend, Hampden," said I; "and—"

"And would fain be your brother-in-law, they say; for I suppose *you* are the Yorkshire greenhorn to whom Fortrose's brother, Tom Mackay, alluded yesterday, when, after calling Charley Roxborough all the smooth, designing knaves that ever primed for *écarté* with green tea, he told me that, besides having hooked poor Fortrose for one of his country-dowdies of sisters, he

had winged for the other some clodpole squire, with a rent-roll of twenty thousand a year."

"In the first place," said I, angrily, "the Miss Roxboroughs are not country-dowdies."

"And yet I would bet a pony that their brother has never let them set foot in town! But now I see that you really *are* the clodpole,—which before I only suspected; and therefore no longer wonder at your eschewing our London ball-rooms, where the idol of your soul (is not that the go among tender-passion-mongers?) is wanting. What is Almack's in *your* eyes but

> A garden, with all sweets except the rose;
> A fount, that only wants its living stream;
> A night, with every star save Dian's beam!"

"You are far more out, my dear fellow, than you think for!" cried I; "to prove which to your satisfaction, if not to mine, procure me a ticket, and I will accompany you there this very night!"

"Turn into King Street with me; and if my mother's carriage is still waiting, we can manage it directly. She has often a returned voucher, late in the day."

On arriving at Willis's, he bad me wait a moment in the hall, the scene of as many *battemens de cœur* as the floors above of *battemens* of another description;—and I trust the half-dozen footmen who were stationed there, wrought about in divers colours, "waiting for an answer" with the sort of covert sneer which is apt to curl the noses of standard footmen when unrestrained by the presence of their masters, had not the wit to discover how uneasy I felt while scrutinized by themselves in person, as by the council of lady patronesses above.

I had nothing, however, to fear. Hampden, who was as much the spoiled child of Willis's, as Rose Stormont of Crowsden Grange, brought me not only a single ticket, but vouchers for the next subscription: and having promised to take me up, in his cab, in time to make our appearance before eleven o'clock (which, in the palmy days of Almack's, when it could venture to give itself airs, was the last moment allowed to dawdlers), he left me to stroll my way back to my solitary dinner.

I was not sorry to find myself forced, as it

were, into the gratification of my curiosity; and should have issued, with unqualified satisfaction, my orders to my servant to have my "things" in readiness to dress by ten o'clock (an order, by the way, which, considering the recency of my dressing-gown and barley-water system, naturally surprised him), had he not previously placed in my hands a letter in Andrew's hand-writing, which I waited only till he had taken himself out of my sitting-room, to open.

"My dear Wrottesley," it began: and this was so great an improvement on the blank cover in which my bank-note had been returned from Wilsbury, that my heart glowed again.

"My dear Wrottesley,

"I am far from wishing that any one should humiliate himself before me as you have been pleased to do. But, grateful for what I believe to be symptoms of genuine affection, I write to assure you that no resentments connected with my own injuries are rankling in my heart. But the respect I owe to the memory of my good

father, who warned me, from the first, that no good could arise from a friendship disproportionate as ours,—that your portion in this world was pastime, and mine was labour, rendering perfect sympathy impossible,—determines me to decline all renewal of our connection. The act of levity which has caused me so deep an injury was one which, if practised against your equal in rank and fortune, would have had less fatal results.

"Set your mind at ease, however, on my account. I have embraced an honest calling, likely to be both pleasant and profitable; and, at some future time, trust to be yet useful to my family.

"If, however, it can at all avail to soften the poignancy of your present regrets, be assured that, were more extensive pecuniary resources than I can command wanted to carry out my projects, it is to *you* I should apply for assistance, because aware that it is to *you* my strait is owing.

"But on this head there is nothing to fear. Thanks to a liberal bequest from my grand-

mother, I am richer than I ever was in my life: and if, in the course of your foreign tour—for the safety and success of which you have my best wishes—you should chance to think of me, be it as of one in perfect charity with you, and sincerely able to subscribe myself,

"Your faithful servant,

"ANDREW GROVE."

While dwelling on the terms of this only too reasonable epistle, the bristles of my dignity rose on end against the *hauteur* with which the poor scholar vindicated his independence; and I entered the blazing ball-room at Willis's with a bright spot glowing upon my cheek, rendered only the more vivid by the extreme debility arising from recent illness. But this hectic flush accorded perfectly with the character which Hampden had thought proper to assign me; of a young man of enormous fortune, in a deep decline, about to visit Nice for the recovery of his health.

The last week of the month of April was certainly an oddly chosen moment for even the

most diaphanous of *poitrinaires* to start for the south. But even had I been aware of the ridiculous rumours circulated by Hampden, I should scarcely have found courage for contradiction; so compassionate were the looks directed by black eyes and blue towards the unfortunate young man, too feeble to dance, and under condemnation from his physicians. One of the most ferociously-turbaned dowagers present made way for me on her sofa, lest I should suffer from standing; and considering the pity wasted upon me, I am afraid that, had they known that my seeming languor resulted chiefly from the false shame of an untaught gawky, scarcely able to distinguish between a quadrille and a valse, I should have undergone the usual fate of impostors.

It was, perhaps, because Lady Northamsted was my patroness,—the patroness whose sign manual had recognized my pretensions,—that I regarded Hampden's mother as by far the most charming woman in the room, and her daughter Lady Margaret, as the most high-bred girl.

While gazing upon her movements, indeed, I almost regretted my ignorance of dancing. Not that she stood in need of any such partner. Throughout the evening, she was engaged for every dance; distinguished alike as the only daughter of an influential Countess, and a beautiful, unpretending girl who would have done honour to any situation in life.

As I stood watching her from behind a distant sofa, like a backwoodsman taking a long shot, I could not forbear whispering to Wrottesley Powerscourt Wrottesley, Esq.—"Harry, my fine fellow, *there's* the sort of wife you should have chosen! Instead of addressing halting sonnets in your boobyhood to an idealized edition of one of Andrew Grove's sisters (even at the time, I scarcely knew which, and changed my Madonna Laura as often as the rhythm fitted for 'Belle' became incompatible with 'Bessie');—instead of pledging yourself heart and soul to a rustic beauty like Caroline Roxborough, having appropriate predilections and engagements of her own;—instead of suffering

your eyes to be dazzled by a prating minx like Rose Stormont, with little more of the woman in her than in her mother's pink cockatoo—I ought to have kept the bloom upon my heart as sacred as a head-gardener on his bunches of hot-house grapes; and been ready, on coming of age, to offer an unmortgaged hand, heart, and estate, to one who, by acceptance, would have doubled their value."

Lady Margaret, however, was so coldly gracious that, if incredulous concerning her brother's account of my dying condition, I saw she gave ample credit to certain passages in my history which he had previously recited for her entertainment.—It was clearly only for Hampden's sake she overlooked my boorishness, and found answers for my vapid questions.

"*Pazienza!*" was my secret exclamation after intersecting a telegraphic despatch from Lady Margaret to her brother, clearly purporting how great a bore she thought me. "On returning to England from the grand tour, I will be a match for the proudest in your ball-rooms and

loudest in Parliament.—The brightest among you shall canvass for admission to Wrottesley Hall. The brightest among you shall aspire to assist its master in building Castles in the Air."

CHAPTER VI.

C'est toujours une belle chose d'avoir vingt ans; mais c'est chose doublement belle et heureuse de les avoir au matin d'un règne, au commencement d'une époque; de se trouver du même age que son temps, de grandir avec lui, de sentir harmonie et accord dans ce qui nous entoure.

SAINTE BEUVE.

I WAS fully prepared for a fierce explosion of raillery on the part of Charley Roxborough, on hearing where I had spent the preceding evening; and, thanks to the attentions of which I had been the object, nerved myself to meet the attack with the dignity becoming an esquiredom which, by this time, had worn easy.

But when Charley walked in, self-invited, to breakfast the following day, he merely observed while skimming over the Morning Post, "You

had a good ball last night, I see. For people whose object is dancing, Almack's is certainly the best in town."

So cool a contemplation of my change of habits distanced me. But to balance the million of questions I had anticipated, I could not refrain from *one*.

"Who told you," said I, "that I was at Almacks?" for I had already ascertained that, among the 'Messieurs' regarded by the Morning Post as deserving notice, Wrottesley Wrottesley was unmentioned.

"Who told me?" replied Charley laying down the newspaper. "Let me see! Some one came in late to White's, and, after complaining that Almack's was going down, declared that the patronesses were glad to admit even Harrow and Eton boys. Lord C., Lord S., and other husbands, brothers, or champions of their High Mightinesses of the Red Bench being present,—this was of course vehemently denied. When the Some One (whose name you will excuse my mentioning, and if you have read the clever pamphlet called 'Les On,' you will

know why,)—the Some One who had been abusing Almack's retorted, 'Why what do you call the young gentleman whom Hampden was dragging about with him to-night like two pointer puppies in a couple?"

Impossible *quite* to refrain from the interjection,—it *may* have been an oath,—into which Roxborough was coolly endeavouring to goad me.—

"On which," continued he, taking no manner of notice of my interruption, "John Jocelyn, protested that Hampden's companion was no Etonian, but recently rusticated at Cambridge. And so it was, (my dear fellow! you are letting the whole urn run out upon the carpet!) so it was I came to know that you had honoured Almack's with your presence."

I was answered. I should have been glad to call "Some One" out, had I only known how; failing which, I tried to prove that I had been insulted by Lord John.

"Why he said nothing but the truth," was Charley's undisturbed rejoinder. "You never *were* at Eton,—or you would not to-day be

disposed to tilt with windmills on finding yourself the object of club gossip. Nor was his manner of telling the truth in the least degree offensive. John Jocelyn is too high bred a man to indulge in vulgar detraction."

Where would have been the use of prolonging a discussion, in which I was as sure to get the worst of it as the bull of the arena, maddened by the paper darts of the *banderillo?* But oh! in my ignorance of the sterling value of such possessions as wealth, health, and youth, how did I envy the superior self-possession of the polished man of the world before me, who could "speak daggers, but use none;" and by mere steadiness of composure set every pulse in my frame a-throbbing!

"And is it true, my dear Roxborough," said I, (by way, perhaps, of avenging myself,) "that Fortrose marries your sister, and that Sir Gratian thinks of letting the Elms?"

"He does not *think* of letting the place. The tenant is found; the lease signed."

"And a long one?"

"Twenty-one years."

"Then it naturally interests me to inquire the name of my new neighbour?"

"Lord John Jocelyn."

I could not repress a start.

"Who is to be married after Easter to Clanalbin's sister," continued my visitor. "They have been engaged for this year past; but the Duke of Sheffield insisted on his son's taking his degree. In their position, and intended like Lord John for public life, it was indispensable that he should go through the University with credit."

"Certainly," said I; though, as my companion knew that I intended *myself* for public life, I felt it to be a slap in the face.

"He and Clanalbin were at Eton together," added Charley, opening and dismissing untouched a third egg with the provoking air of mistrust which, at one's own table, is so insupportable; "and they had the same private tutor at Cambridge."

"But is not this a sudden start of your father's about the Elms?" said I, re-assuming

my vantage ground. "When I saw you at Wrottesley, you said nothing about it?"

"Why bore an invalid with our private affairs? But what did you imagine brought me down into Yorkshire?"

"Sir Gratian fancied that it was to see *me*."

"He might choose to give that colouring to my visit, in talking to the girls; whom he seldom takes into his confidence."

"But he could not expect to conceal from them that their family mansion was to be let?"

"At all events, he chose to keep them in the dark till the last moment; for, *entre nous*, they were the chief cause of the change. Adela having made up her mind, after two years' irresolution, to accept Fortrose, who is a capital fellow, (to say nothing of his fortune and earldom,) it would have been rash indeed to leave poor Car moping from year's end to year's end at the Elms; within reach of those designing Temples, and with no one to forestal a relapse into her girlish follies."

I was afraid to answer!—I dreaded to hear the huskiness of my own voice!—

"But in new scenes and among new people," added Charley, helping himself to a slice of *galantine* on purpose to leave it untasted on his plate, "Car will become open to new prepossessions. It would be neither natural nor pardonable that the girl of twenty should be so little wiser than the child of sixteen, as to insist on throwing herself away on a man wholly beneath her in birth, habits, and expectations."

This was a vast deal for Charley Roxborough to utter at once; for he was habitually sparing of words, except among the ineffables of his inner tabernacle:—people having a code creed and jargon of their own, of which I knew as much as of Cochin-Chinese.

"Temple is said to be sure of his fellowship," said I, hoping to keep up the discussion. "It can scarcely be his policy to marry."

"He is equally sure of eventual preferment from his college; and as my sister has twenty thousand pounds derived from her mother's fortune—"

"I always forget *that* part of her attraction," said I. "To *me* she has others of so much higher value, that I naturally overlook what a Cambridge tutor may be forgiven for remembering."

"His memory, however, will serve him to very little purpose," retorted Charles, compressing his lips with an air almost of menace. "Such a brother-in-law would be as little acceptable to Fortrose as to myself; and he and Adela will find her some Highland chief,—some Mac Brechinloch of Glen Brechinloch,—with a clan, piper, and kilt, and all the rest of it, whose gay tartan will soon cut out Henry Temple's rusty gown."

Lest he should notice the flush of emotion that crimsoned my face at this announcement, I began to talk of the Elms.

"I almost wonder," said I, "that you consented to grant so long a lease of your family seat. If you ever settle in life, it will surely be within the next twenty years."—

"Settle in life?" interrupted Charley—(in much the tone he would have exclaimed, 'Settle

in New Zealand, or Van Dieman's Land!')—"And within the next twenty years? I rather think not!—Not a grain of the matrimonial in my nature! If ruined, I might, as an expedient, marry an heiress, when we should reside on her estate; or, if at fifty gouty or rheumatic, might be tempted to make an honest woman of the surest and safest form of nurse. But in neither case, nor under any possible circumstances, would I live at the Elms."

"You might live at a worse place, Charley!" said I, spirited up for Yorkshire and my neighbourhood.

"I am not sure but I would rather live in the King's Bench," he coolly replied, "than subside into a country Squire. Born in London, I believe I was born *for* London,—like an oak apple for its tree. A London life is the only life that suits me. At the point England has attained in the history of civilization, cities constitute the natural residence of her patricians; nor do I feel completely myself, unless when inhaling my natal atmosphere of London smoke."

"You are the best judge of your own feelings," cried I. "As we used to say at Cambridge,—

Ne quidquam sapit qui sibi non sapit.

You would probably be a miserable man without your club, your opera, and your Tattersall's."

"Under certain circumstances, of course, I find the country pleasant enough," added Roxborough, as if gravely arguing the question. "In another man's house, for instance, where the *cuisine* and shooting are first-rate. For we have reached a grand moment, Wrottesley, in the history of the country. Having secured by a glorious war, a glorious peace, and the lead in European politics, I am much mistaken if the present King and his successor do not restore to the English crown that prerogative which evil times compelled the Stuarts to fling overboard, like a mast in a storm."

I now listened in earnest—aware that my friend retained a cameleon-like tinge of the colours he imbibed at Oatlands.

"Take my word for it," added he, in the tone of a person announcing good news, "that the reigns of George III., Frederick I., and Ernest I. will assign to the aristocracy of Great Britain the privileges they enjoyed in France during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. And consider, my dear Wrottesley, what it is to live in an era like that of Louis Quatorze:—a very hot-bed to the arts, joys, and comforts of life! By the time you return to this country (if indeed you persist in leaving it at a moment so auspicious), you will find that the shallow surges of faction, after frothing themselves into nothingness against the base of the throne, have receded like an ebbing tide; leaving to the King the enjoyment of bestowing as a concession what the people pretend to extort from him as a right."

"The time is past," said I, "for England to accept benefactions from her rulers. All the country wants, is her own."

"Yes, confound her! But who is to define what is her own, if not her anointed sovereign and the ministers of his selecting?—The present Government, thank heaven, is as steady

both in principles and place as the rock of Gibraltar. The Tories are in for the next fifty years—fifty years destined to consolidate the prosperity of the country!"—

Cheered by the sanguine tone of his anticipations, I began, like *him*, to see a new Trianon start up under the haystack-roof of the royal cottage—a new Versailles expand in Buckingham Palace—new bridges extend their cast-iron arches over the Thames, or hang suspended on their piers;—and London embellished by public picture galleries, gardens, and fountains, into something as nearly resembling the brilliancy of Paris as the paste diadems in Rundell and Bridges' shop, the diamond coronets for which they serve as models. I beheld a new Molière in Poole, a Racine in Sheil, a Lully in Bishop, a Perrault in Nash, a Mignard in Lawrence, a Colbert in Sidmouth, and a combination of Louvois and Lebél in Sir William Knighton!—

"We not only possess the most complete and self-dependent Government which ever strengthened the councils of a nation," resumed Charley,

with his usual 'forcible feebleness,' "but are about to exhibit to the world what the domestic misfortunes of the royal family have so long denied us—a refined and accomplished court; —the days of Charles the Second without their profligacy, and of George the Third without their rice pudding and roast mutton. I am thankful for having lived to see our beloved King released from the trammels of the Regency, and able to do justice to his own intentions."

Infected by what appeared his deep-seated loyalty, which was probably inspired by the smoking "cups which cheer, but not inebriate," he had been quaffing, I did my best to emulate his well-bred patriotism; closing my eyes and ears against Manchester and its massacres, or the turmoils of Brandenburg House. But when about to hail the prospect of sitting under the shadow of my own fig-tree in such a state of affairs, the recollection that my hands were as much shackled by my follies as ever those of the Regent by Parliament, caused me to heave a pavior-like sigh.

"Is she dark or fair, Wrottesley?"—inquired Charley, affecting an indulgent smile.

"Of whom are you talking?"—

"The damsel of whom you are thinking."

"Would to heaven," cried I, "that I were thinking of any thing half so agreeable!"

"Then what was it produced a puff capable of extinguishing the spirit-lamp of the tea-kettle?"

"Do you remember," "said I, "John L—'s favourite doggrel?—

> The extortions of the tribe of Levi
> Upon my wreck'd estate hang hea-vy.

Your *protégés* G— and Z— and L—, with their astounding fifty per cent., are sad enemies to a man's peace. Instead of settling in the splendid city or glorious kingdom you have been describing, and endeavouring to persuade some charming Caroline Roxborough to share my Paradise in Park Lane or Grosvenor Square, I must even economize for the next half-dozen years in some confounded foreign town, scented with tobacco, aniseed, and coffee grounds; that

my debts may be paid off, before I recover the command of my income."

"You deliver your jokes with a very grave face, Wrottesley!" said my companion, finishing his breakfast hastily, as though I put him out of patience.

"Jokes, my dear fellows?—I never was more in earnest in my life!"

"Do you mean, that if you have thoughts of perpetrating what Beaumarchais calls matrimony, '*de toutes les choses sérieuses la plus bouffonne*,' you intend to burthen your shoulders during the best years of your life, by gradually clearing off a load of debt; when you might free yourself by a stroke of the pen?"

I suppose I looked more than usually stupid; for he condescended to explain.

"By selling your Winchmere property," said he, "you would be clear at once."

"By sinking two thousand a-year of my income?—Thank you!"

"Whether a man have sixteen thousand to spend, or eighteen, takes neither a dish from his dinner-table, nor a coat from his back," was

Charley's dry rejoinder. "Whereas, to lay by ten thousand a-year out of eighteen, till his best days are gone by, makes what, at Eton, we used to call, a scug of him at once."

The idea of being thought "a scug," whatever that might be—was painful. But the thought still uppermost was that instilled into my mind by old Sir Robert;—that a man has no right wantonly to dismember a property consolidated for hundreds of years;—more particularly when derived, like mine, from the partiality of a relative, who would have fed on porridge rather than alienate an acre.

"A good principle enough," was Charley's biting reply, "were the estate an appanage of hereditary rank, Old Sheffield, for instance," said he, "would be unpardonable, were he to melt away the estate, in consideration of which his dukedom was created by Pitt;"

"In my opinion," I stoutly rejoined, "the representative of an ancient line of commoners has a position to maintain quite as honourable as that of a newly-created peer."

"More so, let us hope!" he replied. "But

unaccompanied by the privileges and responsibilities so onerous to the ennobled. Don't suppose, however, my dear Wrottesley, that *I* advise your breaking up your property on coming of age. I only mean, that in your place, I should prefer being released from painful obligation at the cost of a few clover-fields!"

Alas! how many a man has eventually become a Squire Lackland, from the off-hand ease with which some unprincipled intimate suggests facilities, "pleasant but wrong," to a stranded man, for setting himself once more afloat upon a sea of folly!

After breakfast, Charles Roxborough pleaded an appointment at the Jockey Club, as an excuse for detaching himself till dinner-time; and a suspicion which glanced into my mind, that he did not care to be seen on the *pavé* of St. James's Street, with a man whom "Some one" at White's had placed in a ridiculous light, was mortifying enough to a young blockhead, whom a gleam or two of fashionable sunshine had brought into the fullest bud and blossom of

conceit. But I took my revenge by nodding to him with the most familiar air of superiority, as I sat lounging on my horse by Hampden's side, under shelter of the crooked-armed elder trees, which, at that time, shaded the still more crooked road in Hyde Park, beside Fozard's riding-school—(that barn-like building, as well as the elder-trees, and most of those who used to crouch under them in an April shower, having long ceased to cumber the earth;) at a moment, too, when he was leaning into the carriage of one of the prettiest women in London, whose name was as extensively connected with his own as her title with that of her lord.

When we met at dinner, however, I pretended a still more impertinent ignorance of both; on which Charley, in reply to my inquiries, informed me, that the lady with whom he was engaged in conversation when I so unceremoniously plucked him by the sleeve, was the wife of an Irish Archbishop; adding, with a smile, which made me look hard at the carving-knife beside my plate,—"Could not your playfellow, little Hampden, inform you even of *that?*"

Our sparring might have ended in a real quarrel, but for the presence of the Archdeacon; who was not the man to bear having so excellent a dinner spoiled, either in eating or digesting, by an ill-timed skirmish.

But though he prevented what, had it been suffered to proceed, might have proved the means of releasing my destiny from the ascendancy of its evil genius, the mode he adopted of bringing his fashionable cousin into good humour again, did me the service of opening my eyes still wider to his practices. Exploits which seemed to my ignorance of sporting life deserving of the tread-mill, were treated as traits of genius; and I scarcely knew whether to take as joke or earnest the unghostly churchman's allusions to the Seïds of the Newmarket Mahomet;—rascals whom he used as implements, to bet against him for the benefit of the odds; or buy in valuable horses exposed to the risk of being claimed for a certain sum, as winners against others of inferior value; besides hundreds of minor services which had better be nameless.

At first, I was on the point of exclaiming "swindlers!" By degrees, I began to talk, like the older hands, about "capital jockeyship," —and "the necessity of pulling up one's losses." But by the time the champagne—recommended by the Archdeacon as the best invalid's wine in the world, the bath invented by Medea to restore the health of Jason, had gone its rounds for the fourth time,—I began to feel immensely puzzled as to the relative position of jockeyer and jockeyed; and ended by being quite of the opinion of Charles Roxborough (and the pea and thimble men) that people not sharp enough to take care of themselves, are legitimate objects "to be tuk in."

After a fourth bottle, and the maraschino with which it was topped up, I was puzzled about nothing, and of no man's opinion but my own.—"Borne upon the seraph wings of ecstasy," (or intoxication) I was ready to dispute with Sir Humphry Davy the discovery of his new gas,—with Wollaston of his new metal.—Had poor Grove been present, I should have arrogated to myself the honours of a senior

wrangler;—or if Hampden had dropped in, which was more than probable, have perhaps laid claim to Roxborough's pretended flirtation with the lady of the primate. As it was, I made good my pretensions to remarkable ability by contriving to make my way in Charley's cab to Graham's, and lose there at *écarté* double the amount of the bank-note so scouted by my poor Andrew; though blind-drunk at the time, and unable to keep my seat without holding to the chair.

"I am come to pay you a farewell visit, since you appear still too weak to find your way to Park Place, my dear young friend," said Sir Robert Hawley, who entered my rooms the following day ere my head or heart had half done throbbing after the exploit. "You cannot have forgotten your promise to leave England before Passion Week; and now that I find you looking so much worse than when we parted at Wrottesley Hall, I am doubly anxious you should lose no time in seeking a milder climate."

Provoking enough to be unearthed at such a moment!—But how could I be ass enough to expect, after giving a dinner so *recherché*, to be let off by the waiters from the customary advertisement in the Morning Post—that "Yesterday Mr. Wrottesley Wrottesley entertained Mr. Charles Roxborough and a fashionable party at dinner, at the Clarendon Hotel!"

Even Dolly's Chop-house would have attained temporary fashion from Charley's having eaten one of its dinners. But it was hard enough I should become the victim of his notoriety; as the means of acquainting my guardian with my sojourn in town.

Neither soda-water, however, nor seltzer-water, nor any other approved antidote to the consequences of "the invalid's best beverage," inspired me with courage to look Sir Robert in the face, while compelled by his cross-examination to avow that my carriage was ready,—my passport signed, my courier impatient!—If I had foolishly accepted a dinner engagement

for the following week at the Duke of Banff's, and pledged myself to Hampden to change my vouchers for the ensuing set at Almack's, it was easy to revoke my acceptance. "I could write and excuse myself to both." The old gentleman was so much too far North for me, indeed, that he undertook to leave on his way home, the apologies he made me write in his presence:—the zeal with which he managed to get everything in readiness for my departure the following morning, arising I suspect from the instructions I had already written to my banker and his own, to recall a thousand pounds of my credit with Laffitte, and transfer it to the account at Drummond's of "Charles Edward Roxborough, Esq."

On which hint, Sir Robert saw clearly that I was not safe till I had crossed the Channel!—

CHAPTER VII.

Oui, laisse-moi rêver!—Ah! que la vie est belle,
Quand un rêve fait sur sa nudité
Pleuvoir les rayons d'or de son prisme enchanté,
Frais comme la rosé, et fils du ciel comme elle,
Jeune oiseau de la nuit, qui, sans mouiller son aile;
Voltige sur les mers de la réalité.

NAMOUNA.

Now that every spring carries half London to Paris, (like the fashion-mongers and theatrical managers "in search of novelty," but not, like them, to impose it upon untravelled dupes as of native growth), I am often compelled to join the chorus of optimists who delight in belauding the improvements of the French capital. The lighting and paving, the carving and gilding, the fountains that give their

waters to the winds, and the asphalte which gives its dust to the fountains;—the Hôtel de Ville, which Henri Quatre would be puzzled to recognize;—Nôtre Dame, which, like a *religieuse défroquée* by the revolutionary troubles, seems to tremble at being extricated from cloistral seclusion;—the Champs Elysées, whose gloom has given way to gas, and its mud to granite, while its classical origin is attested by a Hippodrome, and a winter garden of the Hesperides;—the termini of interminable *chemins de fer;* the Quartier Lorette, corresponding with the Quartier Latin like the Arctic with the Antarctic Pole; the *cafés à la moyen âge;* the *restaurants à la Régence;* and, above all, the stately old palace which, as a compensation for its previous humiliations, contains the young family of the new dynasty,—are annually glorified in my hearing; till smitten by the infection, I throw up my cap with the rest, crying—"Vive Rambuteau!—Vive Rothschild!—Vive Louis Philippe!"

But here, seated before my solitary writing-desk, and addressing that beloved public which

is too good a friend for me to delude, I cannot, for the life of me, help owning that whatever may have been the political sins or monarchical weaknesses of the elder Bourbons, the Paris of the Restauration—the Paris I visited in 1821—was a mighty pleasant place.—I was about to add, "to play the fool in;"—but the folly of some is the philosophy of others; and frivolity was then in the ascendant.

The Paris of those days was, in fact, far more Parisian—far more the Paris which Sterne rendered familiar to his country people—than the city which has borrowed pavements from Cheapside and tobacco from the Broadway. Reminiscences of the incense offered to Napoleon, still floated in the air.—The demon-like hoof-prints of the revolutionary struggle were still perceptible in the mud.—One expected to find History wandering about the streets, in search of traits to jot down and sites to perpetuate; and the one-armed, tawny-whiskered, sun-burned invalid, who trod on one's toe at the street corner, was as likely as not to be a hero who had left the missing limb at Moskow, his complexion

at the Pyramids, and temper at Toulouse; and who was looking out for an opportunity to avenge on some gaping English tourist the delinquencies of Sir Hudson Lowe. And was not such a veteran a far finer fellow than the sprucest Spahi of the Armée d'Afrique, making razzias upon the *bonnes* of the Jardin des Plantes?—

And then Talma and Georges, Mars and Fleury, were acting, and Feydeau was piping up its merry *chalumeau*. The Montagnes Russes were crushing people's bones, and the bones of the *salon* crushing people's fortunes; and a thousand Satanic excitements were allowed by the police to

> Create a soul under the ribs of death,

and bewilder the batter-brains of boyish travellers like myself.

I enjoyed myself, too, all the more for recent privation. Nor did my too temporary remorse for the injury inflicted on my earliest friend weigh much upon my conscience. As Rose Stormont had taken the liberty of observing, on

the subject of my Cambridge disaster,—"At our age, Mr. Wrottesley, vexations are soon forgotten. A grey-beard alone broods upon his troubles; because the object which casts no shadow at noon-day, leaves, towards set of sun, a long dark trace behind."

The very elasticity of the air of Paris communicates itself to every susceptible nature. Light diet, light wines, light pastimes, inspire a sense of enjoyment that subtracts twelve hours from every twenty-four; and the vehicle of life dashes down hill without shoe or drag-chain, without being upset at the bottom.

Above all, the Paris of that day was Paris the courteous,—a Paris *qui avait l'honneur de vous saluer*,—which rode no steeple-chases, and would have scorned to borrow the cast-off sportsmanship of our *perfide Albion*. The children in the Tuileries Gardens did not exhibit their little coffee-coloured faces and meagre legs, in a Scotch bonnet and kilt; and the *griffon* snarling on the lap of Madame la Marquise appeared in far better keeping than a King Charles with her own *figure chiffonnée*.

It may be that I see the things of to-day with blinking eyes; and that the head compelled to call in the foreign aid of *Pommade Melainocome* and *Dents Osanores*, generates only discontented thoughts. But certain it is, that the splendours of the Hôtel des Princes have never obliterated from my mind that dingy chamber in the original Hôtel Meurice, (which, when younger, was called the old Hôtel de Noailles,) where I ate my first *potage à la Reine*, and quaffed my first unmedicated glass of Château Margaux.

It was just the moment of the year when, opposite the windows of Meurice's, (every pane of which might suffice for a window in the *multum in parvo* modern establishment that bears his name,) the lime trees of the Tuileries were seen to deepen every hour the delicate tint of their robes of green; and I, who had never beheld a flower in London, save in a huckster's cart or a lady's bower chamber, could not help fancying the gush of lilac blossoms which soon after my arrival clothed the parterres before the château,

must be unreal as those on the fairy garment of *Peau d'Ane.*

For Paris, in spring time, is a very flower bed! The various *marchés aux fleurs* send forth their bushes and *bouquets* in all directions, to cheer the garret window of the sempstress, or brighten the vestibule of a minister of state; and from the orange trees of the public gardens to the roses of Fontenay, the breath of summer smells wooingly in all directions.

But though charmed as a child by these novelties, and often tempted to become a starer into shops or watch, among the *badauds* on the bridges, the progress of a raft of firewood or the plungers of Vigier's baths, I was not wholly blind to the higher objects of enthusiasm abounding in the metropolis of modern intelligence. Nor was I the less interested by the Guidos and Raphaels of the Louvre from having been incited to study the characteristics of the great masters, by the possession of a picture gallery of my own.

The theatres, too, (which, thanks to my early

drudgery with Miss Primer and a variety of lessons in the language, which, on the advice of Blank Blank, I was daily imbibing, I was fully competent to follow,) afforded me an endless source of enjoyment.

My life was as the crystal drop of a girandole, cut into a thousand brilliant facets. But it was not yet given me to surmise over what squalid misery, what deep-laid scheming, what weariness of spirit, what convulsions of remorse the veil of silver gauze I looked on was artfully thrown; when, through the warm haze of a summer evening, I saw the gay population saunter forth;—the patricians to enjoy their drive or ride in the lime-embalmed Champs Elysées,—the plebeians to loiter upon the bridges or on the busy quays; a gay confusion of sanguine hearts and conscienceless souls, who, by attiring the seven deadly sins in a carnival garb of velvet and ermine, succeed in keeping their ugliness out of sight.

From the bitterness with which, even now, I retrace the picture, it will readily be surmised,

that I was made to pay a heavy penalty for my infatuation. Yes! I own it. I played as tyros play: I loved as tyros love. Nor was it till it had been proved to me in black and white, that I had been cheated by *Chevaliers d'Industrie*, and jilted by a coquette, I found courage to write and acquaint Charley Roxborough, (I had sufficient sense of decency not to address Sir Robert!) that my heart was full, and my purse —empty.

It would scarcely have done for my Achates to reply, that "he chose only to assist me with the Jews, when he could also assist me to waste the funds of their providing."—But he contrived to do as little as possible; and I was, accordingly, reduced to the sense of humiliation apt to weigh down a man's spirits when he not only finds silver in his pocket in place of the gold to which he is accustomed, but is forced to keep reckoning even with the silver.

It is ever my darker hours, however, which give rise to my brightest visions, as the brilliant lightning glances from the blackest cloud;

and no sooner did the positive pleasures of life grow unattainable, than I began to construct Castles in the Air far grander than Versailles.

Having made up my mind to start for Baden, whither the better half of Paris had already betaken itself, I began to feel ashamed of having squandered my louis d'ors and time, without knowing more of the French capital than the moving panorama of its outer show. I had seen nothing of its society; had enjoyed only purchaseable pleasures. As Charley Roxborough observed, in the letter of reprobation which accompanied my new letter of credit,— "I had contented myself with eating the peel of the orange!"—

But how to reach the pulp? I had brought with me only the usual Foreign Office letter of introduction, which procures a man a formal dinner-party at his embassy, and diplomatic protection in case some swindler attempts to forge his name or some bravo to cut his throat; and shortly after my arrival, Sir Charles Stuart had quitted Paris for the summer. All I could do, therefore, was to contemplate the stately hotels

of the Rue de l'Université, and smiling ones of the Faubourg St. Honoré, and wonder within myself, whether their inhabitants differed as widely from my discreditable connections, as Caroline and Adela and Lady Margaret Hampden, from the common herd.

One day, a glaring one in July, as I sat breakfasting at Tortoni's on iced prawns and fricandeau, making up my mind whether to go and laugh at Potier that night, or smile at the graceful *naïvetés* of Mademoiselle Mars, and determined, if the dog-star continued to rage so furiously, to betake myself to Baden on the morrow, the name of "Des Auliers," which met my eye in the "Journal des Tribunaux," over which I was glancing, recalled to my recollection that, somewhere in my dressing box, I had a letter addressed to a gentleman residing in Paris, whose name was either the same, or nearly similar; which I had promised Sir Robert Hawley to deliver in person. Yet, though it was the only commission with which my kind old friend had charged me at parting, so immediately after my arrival, had I flung myself into

the vortex of vulgar dissipation, that, till that moment, the letter had completely escaped my memory.

Instantly hurrying home in dismay, I discovered what I feared must have been mislaid, between the leaves of my blotting book, in my dressing-case, not a whit the worse for wear. The address to "Monsieur,

"Monsieur Des Auliers,

"Rue des Tournelles,

"au Marais,"

being as legible as Sir Robert's fine old Italian hand could make it, I determined to lose no further time in executing my commission.

The Marais was a district of course thoroughly out of my beat. But if addicted to rural pleasures, I might have found them in its dreary streets; a very tolerable crop of grass having converted into green lanes several of those adjoining the ancient one which was my object. Having taken it into my head, that Monsieur Des Auliers was one of the foreign correspondents of an agricultural journal which Sir Robert had been at great pains to establish,

and nothing doubting that the voluminous packet of which I was the bearer, contained instructions for the cultivation of fiorine grass, or the extermination of the fly in turnips, I could not help feeling that the pastoral approach to his residence was highly appropriate. But on reaching the handsome old-fashioned stone mansion answering to the number on my letter, I found it alas! shuttered from *rez de chaussée* to *mansarde*! The Sieur Des Auliers was probably gone to get in his hay in the country. Anticipating the appearance of one of the lanthern-jawed, dilapidated community of *portiers* which has replaced the stately Suisse of other days,—vampers of old boots, and breeders of young canaries, who have been consolidated into a class by the graphic pen of Paul de Kock,—I determined not to consign Sir Robert Hawley's packet to his care; when, lo! I was agreeably surprised at finding the *porte cochère* partially opened by a bright-faced, neatly dressed, middle-aged *bonne;* so much resembling one of Molière's chatty *servantes*, so willing to be questioned and eager to reply, that, on

finding "Monsieur had been at his *campagne* since the beginning of June," I was almost inclined to bid her open the letter, and satisfy her curiosity, as she was cheerfully satisfying mine.

For no sooner did she discover, by a glance at my hat—the surest indication abroad of English origin—"*que monsieur étoit étranger*," than she begged me to step in—offered to open the shutters, that I might sit down and rest myself after a walk in such sultry weather; and when she found me resolute against giving so much trouble, put so much personal pride into her request, that I would at least take a turn in the garden, and admire "*les beaux œillets de Monsieur*," that I could not find it in my heart to persist in my national reserve.

Having traversed the stone gateway under the guidance of Martine (I felt as sure the name of the buxom *bonne* was Martine as that my own was Wrottesley Wrottesley!), admiring all the while the jaunty air with which, after carefully closing the *porte cochère*, she stuck her hands in the pockets of her snow-white apron,

I found myself in one of those pleasant sunny little nooks of flowers and verdure which, even in the heart of Paris, bear testimony to the superiority of its atmosphere. The carnations the good woman was so proud of, were bright and fragrant enough to do no dishonour to the button-hole in which she insisted on placing one of the finest; and over a grass-plot still greener than the adjoining street, drooped the feathery branches of a *Vernis du Japon* tree, which Jussieu has rendered a favourite ornament of Parisian gardens.

The lofty walls around us were screened to a certain height by *espaliers* of winter fruit-trees, as prolific as those of an English country garden; and the intervening flower-plots variegated with a rich display of summer annuals dazzling to look on.

"You are quite in the country here," said I, as a noisy chaffinch struck up his monotonous song from the noble tree over our heads.

"Monsieur would scarcely say so," said she, "if he had ever seen my master's beautiful country-seat."

The word country-seat carried my imagination full gallop to Burgundy, Picardy, or Lorraine. But I might just as well have stopped short at what *I* considered the Parisian suburbs.—The "*campagne*" was a citizen's box at Sceaux!—

"My master, Sir, obtained a gold medal for his roses at the Luxembourg flower-show," added she, shaking out her apron as a peacock does its plumes; "and grows the finest fruit in the arrondissement!"—

My first surmise was decidedly right. Des Auliers was a correspondent of the West Riding Agrarian Association!—

"It is his fondness for his garden, Sir," resumed Martine, "which hurries him, every spring, out of town. For you will easily believe, Sir, that Madame Aulai would not be much displeased to remain a little longer in Paris.—*Il fait si bon à Paris!*" cried she, shrugging her shoulders with an air of the intense enjoyment which no one better than a Parisienne feels and expresses.

By her way of pronouncing the name, of her

mistress, or Aulay, I saw that my good guardian was a little out in his orthography; and his misgivings on the subject were probably the cause of his forbidding me to entrust his letter to the post.

"But surely," said I, "Sceaux is but a few leagues distant from Paris?"

"Only five quarters of an hour; which makes me hope that Monsieur will take the gondole one of these fine mornings, and deliver his letter in person to Monsieur and Madame."

Accustomed to associate the idea of a gondole with the Canal Grande instead of with the dusty road of the Parisian *banlieue*, I hesitated.

"They will be delighted to see you," said the comely *suivante*, with the prompt heartiness of her Molièrian prototypes. "Monsieur sees a great deal of company at Les Epines, throughout the summer; and Madame will naturally be eager to welcome a fellow-countryman."

"Madame is English, then?" cried I, my faith in my previous hypothesis a little shaken.

And so, unluckily, was Martine's as to my

acquaintance with her master. If his friend, how could I possibly be ignorant of a fact known from one end of the Rue des Tournelles to the other? — And who could say but that the individual whom she had incautiously introduced into her master's premises might be a thief,— a swindler,—an *échappé des bagnes!*

I read all this, in a moment, in her speaking countenance! But already her mouth was closed. Not a syllable further could I get out of her, except (in reply to my reiterated inquiry) that her master's *campagne* was situated in a by-road, the third turning out of the village of Sceaux. But having stated this just as we had accomplished, for the second time, the circuit of the little garden, she made so decided a turn into the *porte cochère*, that I had nothing for it, when she applied the key to the cumbrous door and set it ajar, but to make my unresisting exit.

On raising my hat to her at parting, I saw that every vestige of colour had deserted her florid face. What a tale would she probably make out of her adventure, when recounting

the story, that evening to the milk-woman or nearest grocer's wife! And what manifold precautions were probably taken, in case the housebreaker should renew his visit with a skeleton key and dark lantern to profit by the observations he had made upon the premises to which she had so rashly granted me admittance!—

Excessively amused by the terrors I had created, it was partly with a view of ascertaining the exact nature of poor Martine's impressions, that I put myself into a *caléche de remise* the following day (the weather was too hot for riding), and made the best of my way to Les Epines; and a disagreeable way enough;—huge wheels of stone quarries replacing, on either side the road, the stripped-up elms which constitute the usual avenues of the Parisian environs.

But towards Bourg la Reine and Sceaux, the landscape becomes prettily broken into villas. Of these, Les Epines pleased me most; as of somewhat a more ancient date and character than the little Italianized buildings stuck in the midst of unsheltered flower-gardens, constituting

the *beau idéal* of such *campagnes;* for, to a Parisian, any abode surrounded by a sufficient quantity of rose-trees, dahlias, and China-asters, is a country house.

The grounds enclosing the residence of Monsieur Des Auliers, on the contrary, instead of depending for shade upon arcades and *bosquets* of clipped hornbeam,—the *charmille*, of which the whole verdure is exterior, so dear to the French,—were, on the contrary, English in design, and English in the neatness of their keeping up.—An abundance of evergreens and American plants adorned the shrubberies; and though, fronting the house, the customary arrangement of fine old orange-trees in boxes, assigned some degree of formality to the lawn, the delicious fragrance they diffused, pleaded, at that moment at least, a sufficient apology.

On glancing further, the eye detected immediate confirmation of Martine's assertion, that Monsieur was a distinguished horticulturist. Never did I see such a display of flowers! And the song-birds of the neighbourhood seemed to be quite of my opinion; for the blackbirds and

thrushes were whistling in the *bosquets*, at a rate which reminded me that the lateness of my breakfast-hour had somewhat too long deferred my setting off. If I did not want to interfere with Monsieur Des Auliers' dinner, my visit must be a short one.

He was at home. But the servant, attired in what in England we should call a shabby livery, who ushered me into the house, informed me that he must seek his master in the grounds; which gave me an opportunity of carefully examining—what I was entering for the first time—a French house, inhabited by people genuinely French.

Though the *jalousies* were closed, so as to temper the atmosphere most agreeably for a day so sultry, I saw that the *parquet* was so highly dry-rubbed as to endow it with the appearance, and almost the coolness, of marble. The furniture and hangings were of plain green silk, which served to throw out the effect of two or three fine pictures adorning the walls; a splendid marine view, which I then fancied to be Stanfield's, and was afterwards taught to

admire as by Gudin; a fine burgomaster-looking old head, of the Meervelt or Janssen's school; and opposite (though forming a pendant as inappropriate as some I had found at Wrottesley Hall), the "portrait of a gentleman" as one used to see them at Somerset House, full fig in a militia uniform and as stiff as a ramrod, with a jolly red-and-white face,—a picture unmistakeably English in subject and execution.

"The vulgar father of the lady of the house!" thought I, remembering Martine's assertion that she was an Englishwoman.

But what was my surprise, on turning to the fourth compartment of the room, to recognize in a water-colour landscape that seemed as little worthy to correspond with the fine oil painting opposite, as the militia captain with the grave old elder in his *rabat* and robes, a tolerably correct view of Hawley Chase! This indicated a far greater intimacy between the proprietor and my old friend, than mere patent-plough associations; and I was beginning to feel eager

for the arrival of my host, that my curiosity might be gratified.

At present, however, saving myself and the summer breeze sweetened by the fragrance of a bed of heliotropes under the window, the room remained empty;—*too* empty I thought; so formal was the arrangement of the large green *fauteuils* and sofas, framed in white and gold, discreetly ranged along the walls. In the centre of the room stood a round table of *marqueterie*, overhung by an old fashioned *girandole* of rock crystal. But there were no comfortable lounging chairs, no books lying about, no portfolios of engravings, no little tables covered with nothings, no signs, in short, of habitation! It was in the strict sense of the word, a "withdrawing room;" a room to which the inhabitants repaired after dinner for the enjoyment of conversation. For in France people *do* meet to converse, as though it were a sufficient pleasure.

At all events, there was no denying that this simple chamber, into which the winds of Heaven

were freely admitted, was a fresher summer retreat than a morning room in an English country house; stuffy with Axminster carpets, curtains of damask, and hangings of flock paper; encumbered in all directions with superfluous furniture and littered by myriads of pretty trifles, which a current of air such as I was enjoying, would blow away.

I was just, in short, beginning to feel myself at ease in Monsieur Des Auliers' house, when its master himself made his appearance; an appearance somewhat at variance with my pre-conceived notions of country pursuits. Instead of the light jacket and straw hat, in which an English garden-lover is usually found in the month of July, the old gentleman was habited in black from top to toe, with silver shoe-buckles, a white cravat, and a countenance at once serious and cheerful; looking very much like a German rector, or an English physician in thriving practice.

My original guess, however, was so strongly confirmed by his appearance, that when, on my

delivering my letter, he inquired with formal interest after the health of "Sire Hawley," I could hardly refrain from inquiring, in reply, after that of "the crops!"—

CHAPTER VIII.

Whatever choice doth bring a joy unstained
Unto the soul, if rightly understood,
Is one more ingot to our fortune gained,
Is wisdom to the wise,—good to the good.

B. C.

BEFORE I had been five minutes in the room with Monsieur Des Auliers, I saw he was a man as little to be joked with as the Master of Trinity. Though his formal bow had been followed by a cordial shake of the hand, it did not place one at one's ease; and no sooner was I seated opposite to him in one of the stately arm-chairs, than the French, which the *attachés* of the English embassy had assured me was excellent, oozed from the tips of my fingers, like the courage of Acres; and I felt myself looking like a blockhead!

Had Hampden or some other of my Cambridge confederates been at hand, we should probably have got up a laugh at the expense of the old gentleman's ceremoniousness. But, unsupported by my brother numskulls, my English shyness nailed me to my place. I could not have felt more uncomfortable if confronting the Lord Chief Justice!

"Sire Hawley," he said, "had done him a great favour in procuring him the honour of my visit." And while he satisfied himself by minute inquiries that my journey had been without accident, I trembled lest his next interrogation should bring to light that I was delivering in July a packet consigned to me in April.

In order to forestal his question, I blurted out another. "How many years had elapsed since he last saw Sir Robert Hawley?"

"I never saw him in my life, Sir," was the somewhat surprised reply; "and, strange to say, poor Albertine is in the same situation."

Albertine was, of course, the English wife. —Her name, at least, did not announce it.

"I regret," he continued, "that her absence from home will prevent her thanking you for the long and doubtless interesting letter, under cover to myself, which you have been the means of conveying. For some time past," added he, with a grave expression of countenance, "the conduct of Sire Hawley towards her has been most kind and conciliating. Yet it is many months since he wrote last!"

My conscience smote me!—He was probably still awaiting an answer to the epistle of which I was the bearer.

"Albertine dines in Paris to-day," said he. "Once a week, throughout the summer, she allows herself the recreation of the opera; where she has a place in the box of her aunt, Madame de Valmoré."

"I understood Sir," said I, "from your servant in the Rue des Tournelles, that, once established in the country you seldom revisited Paris?"—

"Never, to sleep;—but even after the opera, it is easy to be at *Les Epines* by midnight. I am grieved, however, you should have been troubled

to visit our remote quarter of the Marais,—which not a soul of your country-people ever deigns to penetrate, unless occasionally some enthusiast, on a pilgrimage to the old mansion of Madame de Sévigné."

"The Hotel Carnavalet?—Yes! I remember my valet de place suggesting it to me"—I was about inadvertently to add "last May;"—but covered my embarrassment by observing that "I was not surprised he should adhere to a part of the town containing residences of far finer proportions than those now daily arising."

"Yes,—the Place Royale has its advantages," he replied, with a benignant smile; "and having no son to rally me out of my affection for the old-fashioned mansion which has been the abode of my family for the last two centuries,—(for the original of that picture," he continued, pointing to the old fellow I had taken for a burgomaster, "built it even before Madame de Sévigné and her celebrated neighbour of the Hotel de Lamoignon inhabited the district,) I have been allowed to remain a bourgeois du Marais!"—

I replied by inveighing against the mean dimensions of the new streets in the environs of the Tuileries; which, by the lowness of the rooms, seem wholly composed of entresols, and where, in spite of exterior carving and redundancy of decoration, all is paltry and unstable.

"Since you are fond of a noble style of architecture, I should like to show you the loftiness of our reception-rooms in the Rue des Tournelles," rejoined Monsieur Des Auliers; "that you might carry away a better impression of our homes and hearths."

"If they differ as much from the apartments in the Quartier de la Madeleine as *Les Epines* from the villas of Suresne and Ville d'Avray," said I, as courteously as might be, "I can easily judge of them by comparison."

"Comparison, but not analogy," replied my host. "This house was built by my grandfather, about the year 1750: the house in Paris by *his* grandfather, the celebrated Président Des Auliers, whose portrait hangs yonder:—both lawyers of eminence. My

family, as you are aware, is essentially a *famille de robe.*"—

What on earth should I know about his family! The only member of it who in the slightest degree moved my curiosity was the invisible "Albertine."

"Having learned from your coachman (whom I took the liberty of ordering to put up his horses as I came in) that you intended to dine by and by at Sceaux, and return to Paris in the cool of the evening," observed my host, "I venture, Sir, to hope that you will risk a share of my bad dinner, as no worse than the *gargotte* you thought of attempting."

It was in vain I burst into a flood of excuses, apologies and denials. None were accepted. The old gentleman had forestalled the pretext of an engagement at Paris; so dine with him I must,—though no Albertine was forthcoming, and it wanted several hours of my usual appetite!

"Our dinner hour is five," said he; "in Paris, to accommodate ourselves to the hour of the theatres, which we constantly frequent though living at so great a distance; in the

country, because, after dinner, one or two of my neighbours are in the habit of dropping in for a stroll in my gardens, and to enjoy *la causette* with Albertine."

A pleasant prospect for a man shy of speaking French before strangers! But my awkwardness having deprived me of all power of resistance, half an hour afterwards, I found myself seated at table beside Sir Robert's correspondent, with two other quizzes of elderly gentlemen; who, as he informed me, were good enough to keep him company whenever the opera or some other engagement carried off Albertine to Paris; and I doubt whether *Ninette à la Cour* felt half so *gauche* as I in presence of three antediluvians with whom I had not an idea in common; and in whose eyes I was doubtless as curious an animal as any, either stuffed or breathing, in the collection at the Jardin des Plantes.

An untravelled Englishman—the most prejudiced, perhaps, as well as the most *banal* of the Almighty's creatures,—is sure to denounce as ridiculous every custom of foreign countries differing from those of the Smith and Johnson

class of his own. *I*, accordingly, set it down as ridiculous that the old gentlemen drew their napkins through their button-holes, and ate their cutlets without a fork ;—that the two servants in attendance helped the soup and *entrées*, and left the wine undecanted. At first, I missed my sherry, and missed my champagne. But I was not slow in discovering the Burgundy to be so ripe, the Bourdeaux so fragrant, and the Pouilly to have issued from so cool a cellar, that Charles Roxborough himself need not have grumbled.

Even the fare, though what a professed English dinner-giver would have considered disgracefully scanty, was so hot and well served, that I did not once recall with regret the richer *menu* of Véry ; and when the fruit was placed on the table for dessert, had not a plate of Gruyère cheese answered to one of apricots that might have lain for their pictures, could almost have fancied myself seated at some good man's feast, in one of the Ridings of my own Yorkshire.

A glass of very fine old Lunel having been assigned to each of us, Monsieur Des Auliers, who had been vainly trying to hook me into

conversation all dinner time, invited me aside with a smile "to do things in the English fashion;" and having filled his glass with the utmost solemnity, proposed "the health of Sire Hawley."

The name seemed familiar to his two guests, for they were preparing to drink it unquestioning; when the younger of the two, with an air of old-fashioned gallantry, added—

"Sire Hawley,—*et sans oublier Madame Hawley.*"

The combination of the two names instantly brought to my recollection the name of Albertine as pronounced by the comely *suivante* in the Rue des Tournelles.—"Madame Aulay was doubtless Madame Hawley!" and the mystery was developed at once. The interesting widow of Sir Robert's grandson, described to me by Dr. Temple, was probably the daughter of my host.

Sir Robert's injunction to me to deliver the letter to Monsieur Des Auliers with my own hand, was thus accounted for.

Though he carefully refrained from alluding

to his son or grandson in conversation with even his nearest friends, he was probably desirous to learn from one on whose veracity he could depend, some account of the only surviving being with whom they were connected.

What would I have given for means of acquainting my host of my sudden enlightenment, without admitting how thoroughly I had been previously in the dark!

I fancied I had done the thing to perfection by adding to the toast proposed, a stupid avowal of my regret that it should be the absence of "*Madame sa fille*," which procured me the honour of drinking her health.

"You are under a mistake," replied he, with an indulgent smile, "I was never married. Albertine is only my niece—my niece and heiress," added he more gravely. "Her mother, my only sister, died at Pisa; where Mr. Hawley, who had long been residing abroad on uneasy terms with his father, was also in search of health. In a land of strangers the two foreign families became intimate; *so* intimate, that before the winter was over, the son

and daughter were affianced, and in the course of the following summer, united. Fortunately, perhaps;—for neither my poor sister nor Mr. Hawley was fated to see another spring. But, alas! my dear Sir, when the young couple came to visit me in Paris, in deep mourning, on their way to England, to seek reconcilement with poor Wrottesley's grandfather, (according to the wishes expressed by Mr. Hawley, on his death-bed,) I discerned, in a moment, the germs of hereditary disease fast ripening in his frame. Within six months, Sir, he died—died under my roof;—and my poor Albertine, now doubly forlorn, was left alone in the world!"

"You should not dwell upon these melancholy retrospections, my dear friend!" interposed the elderly gentlemen, his guests, on perceiving that he was becoming deeply affected.

"They ought not to appear melancholy to *me*;" he resumed, "since my niece's untimely widowhood has been the means of procuring me the most delightful companion that ever old bachelor was blessed with! Her residence in

my house has taken twenty years off my shoulders. Thank heaven, I know when I am well off! Ask my friends here," added he, addressing me, and glancing at his two companions, "whether I am not the youngest old fellow in the Commune of Sceaux!"

Of course, he received the confirmation he had prepared me to expect.

"The fact is," he continued, "that my poor sister, though an amiable creature, was *avant tout* a woman of fashion; and not even her love for me would have induced *her* to live so far in the wilderness as the Rue des Tournelles! Albertine, however, felt herself in too desolate a position to be quite so fastidious. Recoiling from the idea of crossing the sea to ask hospitality of the proud old man, who, after disinheriting his son for a *mésalliance*, was so stanch in his resentment that his young grandson Wrottesley lived and died without so much as seeing his face,—she was grateful when I clasped her to my heart, and bad her remain there for ever!"

"Sir Robert Hawley, Sir, has been the only sufferer!" said I, fancying that some comment was expected of me.

"I believe he sincerely regrets my niece's determination," said Monsieur Des Auliers. "At the period of his son's death, negociations were already on foot to effect a reconciliation between them. But at seventy years of age, Sir Robert seems to have contemplated the death of a man of five and forty as a remote contingency; and was so conscience-stricken at having allowed his son to go out of the world without the revocation of his paternal malediction, that when poor Wrottesley followed him to the grave, in consequence, it was supposed, of too close an attendance upon his sick-bed, his grandfather regarded this last bereavement as an act of divine retribution!"

"And it may have been so!" was the solemn rejoinder of one of his grey-headed companions.

"At all events, as the news of his grandson's death reached him at the very moment he was prepared to fold him in his arms, restore him to

the enjoyment of his fortune, and place him at the head of his establishment, the blow fell doubly heavy!"

"About three years ago, was it not?—"said I, recalling to mind the dispirited air of poor Sir Robert, in his deep mourning, when I first visited Hawley Chase.

"Thereabouts. It is nearly a year since Albertine left off her weeds."

"And *she*, even now, not two and twenty years of age!" ejaculated Monsieur Des Auliers' sympathising old friend.

"To look at her, one would scarcely assign her even that!" said her uncle.—"Fortunately, the letter addressed by her father-in-law from his death-bed to old Sir Robert, recommended her strongly to his affection."

"Affection?—pretty affection! What can one think of a father, who goes through life estranged from an only son, to punish him for a few pardonable acts of boyish prodigality," exclaimed the less loquacious of the two old gentlemen, forgetting how recently he had filled his glass to the health of "Sire Hawley."

"Admit *mon cher*," remonstrated our host, "that the liberality of his conduct towards Albertine, has made all the amends in his power? On finding that my niece had married without *a contrat de mariage*," continued he, as if for my edification, "and that her inheritance from her mother was inconsiderable, (her father, a noble soldier, having been ruined by the downfall of the Empire), he made a voluntary settlement on her of a sum of fifty thousand francs a-year (two thousand pounds, annually, I believe, of English money), not even revokable in the event of a second marriage."

"A noble dowry, certainly!" cried both the old men. But I, who knew the extent of Sir Robert's property, and the limitation of his personal expenditure, could only faintly reiterate the word "noble."

"Just what he ought to do!" said I. "All I regret is, that he should not enjoy an opportunity of becoming acquainted with Mrs. Hawley."

"You will be far more strongly of that opinion, I can tell you, young gentleman, when

you have enjoyed one yourself!" cried the more talkative of the two elderlies. "So lovely a creature was never seen;—so excellent, never overlooked, and made others overlook, that she was a perfect beauty."

"Come, come, come come!" cried Monsieur Des Auliers, as the servants at that moment re-appeared with coffee and liqueurs. "You will induce Monsieur Wrottesley to give so exaggerated an account to his friend, Sire Hawley of my niece's perfections, that I shall have him claiming her at my hands. And then, what will become of your poor old friend?"—

A cup of the hottest coffee and a glass of the best white curaçoa I ever tasted, closed our repast; and after a leisurely stroll through the delicious gardens, in which Monsieur Des Auliers (who had by this time acquired considerable interest in my eyes,) did not inflict his greenhouses, and tanpits, and forcing houses upon me half so painfully as might have been expected from a prize-flower grower,—we gradually wound our way home again, and found seats placed ready for us between the

orange trees and the house; a spot which the old man denominated with some partiality, his "*salon d'été.*"

Here, as we sat and talked, two or three gentlemanly men dropped in, as though it were their evening custom; to whom I was in turn presented by name. By the whisper that followed, as soon as each in succession could get the old gentleman aside, I saw that my name of "Monsieur *Wrottesley*" instantly suggested me as a kinsman of Albertine's husband, who, it seems, was named Wrottesley after my own godfather;—not without hope, perhaps, on the part of his father that he might eventually succeed to the estate of his heirless old neighbour. But I set their whispers at defiance. In a house inhabited by a Hawley of any description, I felt more or less at home; more particularly now that we were enjoying the clear obscure of a delicious summer twilight, brightened only by a star or two twinkling over our heads, like brilliants spangling the high-domed sapphire vault: while the cheerful murmur of a rural population reached us at intervals from

afar, through an atmosphere embalmed with orange blossoms.

Considering that the united ages of the party (as the Morning Herald would say of some village tea-drinking, failing the overland mail and foreign intelligence extraordinary) amounted to three hundred and twenty years, it is surprising how quickly I found myself at the close of an evening, which possessed so few of the elements that lend wings to the lagging hours.

Though compelled by the pertinacity with which the elderly friends took leave of our host as the clock struck ten, on pretence that it was his usual hour for retiring, to ask for my carriage and take my departure, long before there was a chance of the opera-frequenting lady making her appearance, I will not pretend that, the whole way back to Paris, I did not start up from the reverie in which I lay reclining in the corner of my *caléche*, whenever the sound of coming wheels announced that a vehicle was approaching.

We met but four, however; a *coucou*, the Bourg la Reine gondole, a heavily-freighted

southward-bound diligence, and a hybrid something between a *patâche* and a *maraîcher's* cart,—neither of which was likely to contain a lovely widow rejoicing in an income of some thousands per annum; and though the light emanating from the pearl-grey sky was decidedly insufficient to enable me to distinguish blue eyes and hazel, black locks and auburn, I felt inexpressibly disappointed when, the lights of Paris becoming visible, I saw that all chance was lost.

How, in fact, was it possible for me to be otherwise than interested in Mrs. Hawley,—young, beautiful, amiable, accomplished, wealthy, and closely connected with the person living from whom I had received the greatest obligations! Even the least speculative of my readers will probably admit that Newton himself, or Barême, or Walkingham of the Tutor's Assistant, might have been tempted to superstruct Castles in the Air on such foundations of ivory and gold!

Justified or not, I own I thought of nothing but "Albertine!"—Doctor Temple had been the

first to name her to me, as "young Hawley's interesting widow." But I well remembered once, when pointing out to Sir Robert the necessity for urgent repairs at the Chase, and assuring him that, if he set about restoring Wrottesley Hall, I would send, in return, workmen to scrape the moss and lichen from the *façade* of his house which was beginning to resemble in complexion that filthy rustic dainty, a sage cheese,—he replied, in a voice broken by emotion,—"Nothing shall be done to the old place, so long as it is fated to shelter only its aged master. Were my poor grandson's widow ever tempted to come and visit me, then, indeed,—" he did not finish his sentence; but turned away to conceal his tears.

I had, therefore, confirmation strong, that the gentlemanly old Frenchman who had afforded me such unostentatious hospitality, did not exaggerate her merits; and a greater philosopher than W. W. scarcely escaped from his teens, might have been excused for allowing an oath or two to escape his lips, while reflecting that, had he delivered the letter he was charged

with at the proper time and place, his acquaintance with the fair widow would have been of three months' earlier date; at all events, that had he chosen to visit Sceaux on any but an opera night, he need not have been on the *qui vive* for a glimpse of her fair face, in a *coucou* or *maraîcher's* cart.

But, as I was now beginning to discover, I was born, like too many others, under the influence of the fairy Guignon; blest with advantages I knew not how to make use of, or making use of them at the wrong moment:—*cherchant*, as the Italians say, *midi à quatorze heures*;—eating my fruit green, or hoarding it untouched till it was mouldy.

So much were my fancies at present engrossed by the image of this youthful beauty, so fair, so ill-fated, wrecked upon the threshold of life, yet submitting so angelically to the decrees of Providence,—that I not only refrained from taking my customary ice at Tortoni's that night, and even from a visit to Frascati then the height of the fashion; but, for the first time since I quitted England, retired to rest without

having previously cast my eyes on a certain sketch, which for a year past I had preserved in the secret portfolio of my travelling desk; a sketch which I had stolen from Charles Roxborough, though, I suspect, perfectly with his knowledge and consent; representing his two sisters in the characters of Minna and Brenda. It had been made in the fly-leaf of his betting book, by Sir Thomas Lawrence, when on a visit to their neighbour, Courtfield of Courtfield, to paint his picture for the Guildhall of York; and from the fidelity of the likenesses, and unspeakable grace of the grouping, might have dispensed with the initials "T. L." in the corner, which announced it as the work of a master hand.

Since I became an exile, that little sketch had been a relic for my worship;—a something holy to recall me to my better hopes for this life and the next, from the influence of maddening orgies, such as Paris alone supplies; orgies that sow the seeds of vices, which, like Jonah's gourd, spring up into maturity in a night. But I wanted no amulet after my visit to Les Epines!

The impressions I had received *there*, sufficed for my protection.

Next morning I woke, and found the visions of the preceding night still haunting my pillow! Naturally enough, I began the day by turning over again in my mind, from first to last, every page of the Des Auliers' chapter; over again, and over again, and again, for the last time; till, as usually occurs from too much stirring of a shallow soil, all continuity of surface disappeared. Black became white—white black; till what, at first, I thought so fair, grew ugly as the very deuce!—

In the first place, what business had Sir Robert to entrap me by a poor subterfuge into making acquaintance with his grandson's widow? when, by addressing his letter to her uncle he was likely enough to have betrayed me into paying the visit in gaiters, in a blouse, in a hackney coach, or any other ignominious seeming?—In the second, what business had Monsieur Des Auliers to lay violent hands upon me, at first sight, and insist on my dining at his house? As became a person who piqued himself on

being lynx-eyed and mole-eared, I could discern mischief lurking even under the hospitable folds of a table cloth!—

But above all, what business had this peerless Artemisia of one-and-twenty, to be at the opera? If residing with her uncle at the citizen's villa he fancied a country seat, why desert the fragrance of his orange-trees and melody of his nightingales, to encounter suffocation in a crowded theatre; for the pleasure of seeing half-naked men and women fling about their legs, or shriek like a chorus of brazen axle-trees? If this were not profanation, if this were not an utter desecration of the decencies of widowhood, might I never taste the musky Chambertin of her uncle again!

Such of my readers as are still young enough to remember the variable temperament of their one-and-twentieth year, will perhaps discern in these transitions the first shivering fit of a fever, *i. e.* the first caprice of incipient love. *I* fancied myself, however, far more disposed towards disgust; and when, two days afterwards, I received a billet, signed in delicate *pattes de mouche*

with the name of Albertine Hawley, thanking me in all the warmth of French phraseology for "having brought the most welcome of letters, and entreating me to compensate her for her ill-fortune in being absent from home at the moment of my visit to Les Epines by an early return," I indulged in an audible exclamation of "humbug!" and thrust the letter into a drawer; resolved to vouchsafe no manner of answer. Had there been a fire in the room, indeed, it would have instantly disappeared in the flames!—

"For, after all," as I observed to myself half a dozen times in the course of the day, "was I bound to repair Sir Robert Hawley's neglect of his grand-daughter-in-law? Because he had not chosen to place her at the head of his establishment at Hawley Chase, was I to go through the penance of swallowing the dust of the Sceaux road in the dog-days? Should I, in my own country, have dreamed of mustifying myself by a humdrum dinner in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields or Bloomsbury Square? And why must a family of French lawyers needs be better

company than those of Gray's-Inn Lane?—No, no! Good eating and good wine were too readily attainable in Paris to inspire patience with the stringy *fricandeau* and greasy *épinards* of a *cuisine bourgeoise*."

Tom Whichcote himself, in short, could not have been more insolent or more ungrateful!

CHAPTER IX.

Prepare to answer
A stormy adversary—an inhuman wretch
Incapable of pity, void and empty
From any dram of mercy.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE following post brought me a letter in Sir Robert Hawley's handwriting, which I had scarcely courage to open, so fully was I prepared for reproaches touching my neglect of his urgent commission. I pictured to myself his indignation. I pictured to myself his sober *exposé* of the numberless evils which might have arisen from my non-delivery of a confidential letter, which, for aught I knew, might contain a large sum of money; which, as I *did* know, contained words of kindness, dearer than gold.

With my usual aptitude for shrinking from disagreeable sensations, accordingly, I laid the epistle of remonstrance aside, to tear open one from Charley Roxborough; when, to my surprise, a scrap of paper, scrawled over in my own scarcely legible handwriting, dropped from the envelope. But so carefully was my signature in full attached to the document, that I nothing doubted it was some "promise to pay" which I had neglected; of which Charley, as my honorary factotum, was commissioned to remind me.

After a deliberate perusal, however, and close consideration of the promise it purported to substantiate, I was almost inclined to doubt the evidence of my senses; and I turned the paper round and round, and held it up to the light, to satisfy myself that no forgery had been practised; that the signature was not only my own writing, but attached to the identical engagement to which it was superposed. And alas! there was no disputing its authenticity. Wholly as the fact had escaped my memory, I had certainly signed the paper; which solemnly

pledged me to nominate to the living of Rainham, whenever it might fall vacant, a person to be suggested by my friend, Charles Edward Roxborough, Esq. !—

Having failed in my hope of finding the document what I had ventured to call Mrs. Hawley's note, "mere humbug," I next examined the date; trusting, for my own consolation, to find that it was later than my formal promise to Sir Robert; in which case, the priority would hold in favour of the latter. But no! It was dated within a year of my being entered at Cambridge,—namely, from Glenhama; and the name of Lord Fortrose was subscribed as a witness. This indeed afforded some clue to the mystery; for I knew that, when first introduced to the fiery whisky of the Highlands, I was accused of having committed extravagances without name, and performed exploits which have passed into a proverb on the moors; and in the frenzy of some drunken frolic I had doubtless been induced to sign this fatal engagement.

But what was I to think of the cunning of Charles Roxborough, who, from that day to the present, had never once reminded me of my pledge?

"Yours is not a memory that ever requires jogging in pecuniary matters, my dear Wrottesley," ran the letter in which my promise was enclosed. "But as I find the poor old Doctor at Rainham is on his death-bed, it may not be amiss to call your attention to the nature of your engagements concerning the advowson. As the concession was granted as a token of gratitude on your part for what you chose to consider an act by which your life was preserved, (swimming out into the Glenhama Loch to pick you up when you were mad enough or drunk enough, to take out the coble with an equinoctial blowing full in your teeth!) I am satisfied you will be as glad to redeem your word as it was then thankfully accepted.

"I will not fail to let you know when the old gentleman's taper is finally burnt out. At

present, I have no news, good or bad; except that money is as scarce in London as the Pitt diamond, and that I am ever, my dear Wrottesley,

"Yours faithfully,

"C. E. R."

"P. S. Hampden is regularly cleaned out.—The mighty Earl his father paid four thousand for him last week, after taking his bond (that is his word) never to set foot in Graham's again; and the poor boy has been packed up in the family waggon, with the trunks and *batterie de cuisine*, to be forwarded to their country seat; there to remain till the crack of doom, or till, as his father says, he grows wiser."

Though relieved by the information conveyed in this flighty epistle from all apprehension that Sir Robert's letter related to the Des Auliers' affair, I was more than ever reluctant to break the seal. I knew every word the letter contained! Like Charley's, it came to

inform me of Dr. Redcross's fatal illness, and remind me of the solemn promises contingent on his death; with a fling or two at the delinquencies of Andrew Grove, and the suggestion of some unimpeachable guardian for the glebe and twelve thousand souls of Rainham!—

Wrong again, by Jove!—My anticipations attained not half the truth!—

"I am convinced that it is needless to remind you, my dear young friend," wrote Sir Robert, "of the pledge you were induced to offer in exchange for the service I was so happy as to render you by clearing off your Cambridge accounts. I will not conceal from you, dear Harry, (for I am eager to open my heart, in order to secure your confidence in return) that at the time I made the stipulation, it purported solely to create a safeguard against the inferior connections forced upon you by the less prosperous fortunes of your boyhood; feeling by no means secure that your insidious friendships of Eagle House might not supply some other

farmer's or tradesman's son to fill the vacancy luckily created by the worthless conduct of young Grove." (Poor Andrew!)

"But as things have turned out, I have doubly reason to applaud my forecast. My poor friend, your late revered godfather, had, as I once hinted to you, pledged himself to Dr. Temple of Wrottesley, to bestow this living on his younger brother. But as his will made no allusion to the circumstance, and the promise was simply verbal, the good Doctor had too much sense and delicacy to prefer the claim; and the earnest entreaties of Sir Gratian Roxborough, (indignant at the young man's pretensions to the hand of his daughter,) rendered impossible my interference. For Sir Gratian is an old neighbour,—a kind friend in former years to my poor, poor son!—and I was unwilling to assist in mortifying his declining age.

"Last week, however, as soon as the news transpired in the county of Doctor Redcross's apoplectic seizure, I was waited upon by Archdeacon Roxborough,—a coarse man, Harry, but a conscientious,—who afforded me further

insight into the Temple affair. His young cousin, he assures me, (the one you thought so prepossessing) is so seriously attached to young Temple, that nothing but conviction that the match would ruin his college prospects, prevented her from giving him her hand on the day her sister was married to Lord Fortrose. Thanks to the mad improvidence of their smooth-tongued brother, the young ladies, it seems, have not only lost the protection of a decent home, but, by Sir Gratian's foolish confidence in the honour of his son, a considerable portion of their fortunes!—Absolute robbery, is it not?—And poor Car, whose health I grieve to say is seriously impaired, is forced to reside in Scotland with the Fortroses, far from the friends of her girlhood; on the sufferance of a brother-in-law who is too much the friend of Mr. Roxborough to hold a high place in my esteem.

"Of young Temple, on the other hand, the Archdeacon speaks in the highest terms. The moment he was apprized of the gap made in Caroline's fortune, he renewed the offer of his

hand. Though his fellowship was nearly all he had to depend on, nothing but the sweet girl's resolute disinterestedness prevented his resigning it at once. On his personal merits, I need scarcely enlarge, for you must have known him at college. But if his pastoral vigilance at Rainham be only half as zealously exercised as that of his good brother at Wrottesley, you may congratulate yourself on two incumbents such as few patrons can boast of. I say 'may,' instead of 'might,' nothing doubting that you will second, with as much pleasure as promptitude, the nomination of, my dear Harry,

"Your affectionate friend,

"and faithful servant,

"ROBERT HAWLEY."

And now, what was to be done? I say, what on earth, dear reader, was to be done? On whose forbearance was I to throw myself? From which of the two had I the best chance of consideration? Alas! were Sir Robert even disposed to withdraw his claim, how could I ever forgive myself, while contemplating the

sunken eyes and wasted form of Caroline Roxborough, for having withheld the panacea certain to restore the bloom of youth! Poor girl! poor Car!—The being I affected to idolize, as a type of those ethereal spirits whose companionship is to suffice for our immortal bliss, was my selfish levity about to pronounce her doom!—

I scarcely know for how many hours I endeavoured to exhaust my restlessness by pacing up and down my room. But my comings and goings did nothing towards the answers it was indispensable I should despatch by return of post. Not a day was to be lost. Though less versed than many in the tactics of country life, I had seen enough, at various times, to be aware of the ferment which arises in a neighbourhood whenever a living of such magnitude as Rainham falls vacant; and I was desirous of forestalling the discussions to which the smallest demonstrations on the part of Charles Roxborough might give rise.

It was to him, therefore, I first addresssed myself, and not in my usual slipshod manner;

as when writing to announce that I had lost a certain number of hundreds at play, which, since cost what they would they must be forthcoming at a certain date,—I trusted to his ingenuity to levy; but earnestly and soberly.—For the first time I wrote like a man, because manly feelings were stirring in my heart.

I began by attesting on my word of honour, that I remembered nothing of the engagement he had placed before me. "I must consequently have been drunk," I continued, "when the promise was extorted; and I ask you, in all conscience, whether it was the act of a friend to play upon my boyish weakness in so solemn a matter? The proof that I knew nothing,—absolutely nothing,—of the engagement in question, is, that I subsequently pledged myself in a contrary sense to my guardian, in an agreement witnessed by the solicitor to the estate.

"That neither the one nor the other is binding on a minor, I am fully aware. But since compelled by the strait into which you have betrayed me to break my word in *one* instance, I entreat you, Roxborough, not to compel me into an act

of gracelessness towards my unfailing friend Sir Robert Hawley; who has asked me this one favour in return for concessions innumerable. You, who are aware by what means I was surprised into signing away my nomination, cannot, as a friend and a man of honour, persist in enforcing your demand. But I do not rest upon the equity of the case. I entreat you, as a kindness for which I shall be ever grateful, to cancel the paper which I herewith return you for the purpose."

As to a further appeal to his feelings in favour of his poor sister, I was beginning to understand him too well to dream of such an act of quixotism. Besides, if even *I* found it difficult to overlook my antipathies to Henry Temple and renounce my last chance of calling Caroline my own in favour of her fond, faithful, and heartfelt attachment, what was to be hoped from her worldly-minded brother,—bent upon establishing his sister at Wrottesley Hall, in the hope of perpetuating round my neck his chain of bondage?—

This disagreeable missive despatched, I per-

suaded myself that there was no need to answer Sir Robert's letter till I heard again from Roxborough. Better delay till the last moment the annoyance of so unsatisfactory an explanation.

But, strange to tell, my uncertainty concerning Roxborough's intentions shook my own concerning Mrs. Hawley. It was not the moment to risk a second offence against my kind old friend at Hawley Chase. At all events, I would do nothing desperate. There was no occasion to burn my ships. The *billet* of Albertine as well as Sir Robert's letter, should for the present stand over.

All this, however, though easy to write, was far from easy to resolve on. Four or five days must elapse before my mind could be relieved from its misgivings; till when, it would be stupid enough to execute my project of starting for Baden; and who that was ever condemned to a fit of the fidgets in Paris during the dog-days, but will compassionate my position! The dust, the glare, the ill savours that beset me, stimulated my pettishness beyond all bounds.

At that glowing season of the year, when the Parisian is to be found every where but on the banks of the Seine, pursuing his butterfly hunt at Baden, or Aix-la-Chapelle, at Bagnères or Saint-Sauveur—or doing the country gentleman, by angling for gold fish in the marble basin of his château,—the condemned wretches, grilled even to crispness, who remain on the hot *pavé*, consist of stragglers of the royal household, perpetually galloping along the dusty *chaussée* that unites the Tuileries with the grassy lawns of Neuilly;—a few diplomats, unable to obtain their *congé*, and public functionaries, who, like the said diplomats, must remain at head-quarters, to keep the pens and ink, which constitute the lamp-of-Vesta of a State, eternally flowing;—and a few stray English, such as are to be met with, disporting themselves like lizards on every sunny wall in Europe; who, on their way to distant watering-places, stop short at Paris, too much relieved by their release from smoky London, to recollect that they may go further and fare better.

But even the placemen and diplomats, with

many of whom my intimacy with the English *attachés* had made me acquainted, had daily engagements that disposed of a portion of their day in the snug retreats of Auteuil and Bellevue, the favourite *villeggiatura* of ministers and ambassadors; and I was consequently left to eat a solitary dinner, and deplore the deserted hazard tables of the Salon. The four days of my suspense appeared to have been multiplied by four!

On the fifth, however, while slowly descending the stairs at the Frères Provençaux, to dine in the public room, by way of a fillip to my ennui, I was hailed by Nestor Platicheff, one of the Russian *attachés;* who, affecting an intense Anglomania, lost no opportunity to acquire a taste for dammees and raw meat, by associating with all sorts and conditions of Great British. We agreed, of course, to dine together; and having, in the course of the ensuing hour, talked ourselves into good humour with each other, by a series of the boasts and *blagues*, the lyings and slanderings, by which an empty-headed fellow of twenty fancies he imposes himself on

the world as an Alcibiades, a Rochester, a Lauzun, or a Chevalier de Grammont, we next determined to proceed to one of the theatres.

Away we drove, accordingly, in Platicheff's cab, to the Vaudeville. "*Relâche*," for some confounded rehearsal!—At the Variétés, neither Potier nor Brunet were to act.

"Why not the opera?" said I, aware that Platicheff belonged to the diplomatic box.

And on his raising some idle objection, a suspicion which rushed into my mind, from seeing him glance at my dress, that he did not care to be seen by his own set in company with one whose *négligé* differed widely from the elaborate *négligé* assumed by foreigners during the summer season, determined me to persist. To the opera, therefore,—though I would far rather have heard a new piece of Boïeldieu's at Feydeau,—to the opera, we went. I forget what was the performance of the night; some horrible mythological screechification belonging to the old repertory—though, for anything I know, the music may have been Glück's, and excellent.

But the young men of that day frequented the opera, to chat between the *entrées* of the ballet; finding entertainment during the solos, for which a French audience insists on silence, from a critical study of the audience.

At the close, therefore, of an air divinely sung by Cinti, who still unmarried, was fighting her way to popularity,—I could not refrain from inquiring of my companion, to whom the surface of Parisian society was as familiar as his glove, the name of two ladies occupying a box above the *balcon*.

"Which?—The sallow woman in the lace cap?"—

"—Accompanied by a very fair one, having nothing in her hair, and a single rose in her hand."

"I see, I see!" whispered he, evidently afraid that my misplaced earnestness might be noticed.

"Who are they, then?"—I continued, fancying by his manner, that not to know them argued myself unknown.

"*Que diable!* How should I know!"

"I fancied," said I, a little disappointed, "that you were afraid of my appearing interested in some person only too notorious."

"A pretty woman can scarcely be too notorious;" replied the *attaché*. "But when a face so lovely as the one you are pointing out cannot at once be identified, depend on it the owner is not worth an inquiry. I have seen those women here before, but no where else that I remember; so that they must belong, of course, to the *bourgeoisie*."

"That elegant creature with the light hair, a *bourgeoise*?" cried I, with some indignation.

"You have no notion, my dear fellow," cried he, twirling his moustache with an air of insolent *fatuité*, wholly different from a Frenchman's gay impertinence,—"you have no notion what progress has been made in Paris by the *Société de la banque!* Monied people are doing as much for themselves here, as in England. There are two or three houses in the Chaussée d'Antin, which none us of scruple to enter."

"But even there, you say, yonder pretty face is unknown?"

"Utterly! Probably the wife of some *employé* or a retired perfumer of the Rue Vivienne!" rejoined Platicheff, affecting ineffable disgust. "A class of females one is forced to treat with the deference due to their betters; though after all *on y est pour ses frais!*"

Provoked at hearing this impertinence levelled at persons whose appearance was in the highest degree distinguished, I took the earliest opportunity to leave my place; and by lounging along the opposite *couloir*, obtain a glimpse into the box; the door of which, thanks to a degree of heat that caused even the rose held by my *belle blonde* to droop and wither, was likely to be open during the *entr'acte*. Still, I was little the gainer; so sedulously was the space immediately filled by persons eager to exchange a passing compliment with the two ladies; who, if unknown to Platicheff, had a large acquaintance among those he had pointed out to me as his friends. By these, they were accosted with a deference of respect wholly at variance with his flippant insinuations.

At the close of the *entr'acte*, I went in

quest of one of the English *attachés*, whose red face had been visible for a moment in the embassy box, and who might perhaps condescend to enlighten me.

While wandering about in search of him, I was startled by suddenly perceiving the objects of my curiosity slowly descending the opposite stair-case; the lady in the cap leading the way, on the arm of a well-known general officer belonging to the household of Monsieur; the younger, the fairer, the more charming of the two, loitering *a little* behind,—perhaps of her own accord, perhaps forcibly detained by the movements of a strikingly handsome young man, on whose arm she was leaning.

They passed so close to me, that the fragrance emitted by her hair or dress was distinctly perceptible. They passed so close to me, that I could almost distinguish the words breathed into her ear by her companion. It might be the effect of imagination,—but I *thought* I heard him whisper, "*Comment! vous retournez ce soir à Sceaux?*"—

"*A Sceaux!*"—Perhaps to *Les Epines!*

Might not a less active Castle Builder than myself have been pardoned for exclaiming at such a juncture,—

"The widow of Wrottesley Hawley for a thousand!"—

And the widow of Wrottesley Hawley it proved to be!—

CHAPTER X.

Holy St. Francis! What a change is here!
Is Rosaline, that thou didst love so dear,
So soon forsaken? Young men's love then lies
Not truly in their hearts, but in their eyes.

SHAKSPEARE.

It is a mistake to attribute the sameness of modern life to paucity of incident. Not a human being but could recount, if he chose to relate *verbatim* the story of his life, events as extraordinary as any recorded of the times we are pleased to call romantic. The want of high sentiment to turn them to account, lies in ourselves. A smack-smooth, vapid inanity of character created by the heavy rollers of civilization, by shaping every member of society after the same model, incapacitates us for taking

advantage of the incidents that present themselves. We are afraid of being laughed at as raw, new, or vulgar, if we accept with pleasure or surprise any event out of the common line. Were an aerolite to tumble on our heads, we must treat it like a hailstone!—

Though not yet past my nonage, for instance, and a person of no mark or likelihood, I had been myself the hero of adventures, romantic enough for the pages of Mr. Newman's wildest novel. But though the manner in which my noble fortune had reached me was startling enough to have vivified my nature into the ambition of doing it honour, and dealing thankfully with what might be regarded as an especial blessing of Providence, so strong is the influence of vulgar routine, that I had rushed headlong into the vices and weaknesses supposed to be the concomitants of hereditary wealth.

Lest I should not be recognised as worthy to be a pigeon, I had perched myself fluttering my wings on the house-top, waiting to be plucked; so that now, when a few months divided me from the moment which was to have brought

me into the enjoyment of independence and eighteen thousand a-year, I was reduced to petty shifts, and prospects of care and privation. Like other children who tear open their rose-buds in the green spring-time, my summer season was doomed to be unembellished with roses.

Still, my philosophy being but skin-deep, I looked forward with stupid resignation to finding on easier terms, in other countries, the pleasures of which I had robbed myself in my own. Even when forced by an accidental view of Mrs. Hawley to admit that the three months and three thousand pounds I had been squandering in Paris, among *croupiers* and *figurantes*, might have been turned to pleasanter account in the society of the beautiful and elegant woman with whom poor Sir Robert had been at such superfluous pains to bring me acquainted, instead of admitting how completely I was below the level of Les Epines, either in a moral or physical point of view, my first idea was to render her duly conscious of the loss she had sustained. Trusting to the impertinence of my

rouéism to throw a gloss over my previous neglect, I resolved to admit with affected frankness that the letter had been three months in my desk,—shrug my shoulders, own my delinquency, and plead the *mille et un* fascinations of a city where the pleasures of the day obliterate all thought of yesterday or to-morrow.

On comparing the progress of human folly in the times I have lived in, I sometimes ponder which is the more disgusting,—the slang now prevalent, or the fribble-ism in vogue when I was young. Much has been said and written—more than enough perhaps—against fashionable novels; as a wanton waste of human ingenuity in the concoction of what it is a wickeder waste of human time to peruse. But no one can deny that these fictions succeeded in writing down the exclusivism and dandyism of the court of George the Fourth, as completely as knight-errantry was extinguished by Don Quixote.

> Safe from the bar, the pulpit and the throne,
> But touch'd and shunn'd by ridicule alone,

the meretricious frivolities of fashion became loathsome by reiterated exposure,—like the drunkenness held up to shame, by the force of example, for the edification of the Spartan youths.

In my time, a young fellow trusted implicitly for irresistibility to the varnish of his boots, the tie of his cravat, and the parade of his self-sufficiency. But I doubt whether any honourable or right honourable yachter of this present season be capable of fancying, as I did, that, because I had been seen a few times in St. James's Street on the arm of Charley Roxborough, and had given (at his instigation) five hundred guineas for a cab-horse, I had only to ride down to Les Epines, and look Mrs. Hawley out of countenance, to render her conscious of all she had lost by my remissness.

Some suspicion of my deficiencies was at the same time betrayed in my preparing for the visit by recourse to the tailor and hatter, the *bottier* and *chemisier*, recommended by Nestor Platicheff when we dined together at the Frères

Provençaux, with the air of compassion with which one flings an alms into a beggar's dish. I consequently made my appearance at last, in all the uneasy gloss of novelty, twice as awkward as twice as trivial as my wont.

Fictitious autobiographers are apt to fall into the error of describing the state of being in love, as "all compact," definite, and limited as the boundaries of a county traced out in a printed map. Their hero's passion for Sophia is described as succeeding his passion for Clarissa,—not as imperceptibly as Romeo's for Juliet, to Romeo's for Rosaline; but as Scotland succeeds to England, with the Grampian mountains between. But few of those who examine the reminiscences of their own hearts and the incidents of their own lives, will deny that scarcely a given moment of their youth admitted of swearing to a solitary object of attachment. Till the heart throb with that master-passion which impels a man to seek a partner for life by an impulse as overmastering as that which prompts an heroic action, or generates a *chef-d'œuvre*, it is pretty sure to experience a succes-

sion of feverish spasms; the commencement of one of which is as hazily interblended with the conclusion of another, as with nocturnal darkness the glimmerings of a summer-day dawn, when "Night is at odds with morning, which is which."

I drove down to Sceaux *very* leisurely, so as not to disturb a particle of my *recherché* costume; and timing my visit to arrive *à la brune* and affect to return to Paris in time for dinner.—I was satisfied that no human face, however lovely, would ever efface from my heart the image of which Lawrence's sketch secured the daily refreshment; and whenever in Byron's glowing pages, some expression of impassioned despondency met my eye, I scored the passage again and again with my pencil till it resembled the gridiron of St. Lawrence, as expressive of the anguish of my own unrequited love. I was even romantic enough to wear enclosed in a medallion ring of black enamel, a shred from a lock of hair which Caroline's designing brother had been careful to leave in my way; and for some time after my second visit to old Des

Auliers, persevered in those monkey tricks; with the same volume of Byron lying dog's-eared on my table, and the ring still worn and cherished; though, had I not been the most besotted of novices, I might have known from the first day, that my heart had elected a new idol.

Not because my sleep and appetite were troubled. Not because, instead of persisting in my eagerness to rush off to Baden and cool myself in the depths of the Black Forest, I was no longer conscious of unusual fervour in the temperature of Paris. But because, by an instantaneous-light process of enlightenment, I had been forced to admit myself a sorry fellow.

If women who, at the utmost pitch of their vanity, appreciate only half their *real* value, did but know the mightiness of their influence over the stronger but more malleable sex, what wonders might they not accomplish! For after all, the victorious coquetry which aforetime sends a man to pick up a glove in a lion's den, or armed a king of France and all his legions

to "scour those English" thence, exercised a less potent spell than the gentle smiles of Mrs. Hawley, while lending her indulgent attention to my shallow apologies.

Nothing could be more embarrassing than my self-introduction:—for I found her seated alone, with her work in her hand, under shelter of the old orange trees; while Monsieur Des Auliers and his friends were making the round of the garden.

"I have far too much pleasure in welcoming any friend of Sir Robert Hawley," said she, in reply to my excuses for the tardiness of my visit, "to feel hurt that a first visit to Paris should have supplied him with interests more exciting than a dull walk to the Marais, or a dusty drive to Sceaux."

I had made up my mind to keep to myself my discovery at the opera, and the trouble and five franc piece it had cost me to have her watched into the carriage and the name of its owner ascertained; and presented myself simply as if in reply to her letter. Her own nature, however, was too candid to disguise

from me that I was not mistaken in supposing myself to have attracted her notice on the night in question.

While hurrying from the vestibule, on her footman's announcement that "*la voiture de Madame était avancée,*" I fancied I heard the word "*compatriote*" exchanged between her and her handsome cavalier, whom I fairly wished under its wheels; and my supposition was now frankly confirmed.

"I little imagined," said she, "when Count Max de Charney pointed you out to me the other night at the opera, as probably a countryman of my own, that I had so lively an interest in the question."

Though accustomed to profess a prodigious contempt of all things foreign, the notion of having John Bull ticketed upon my person displeased me. But there was nothing in the outward man of the said Count Max on which I could ground an ironical retort; and Mrs. Hawley's manner of speaking was so mild and natural as to disarm animosity.

"I am too proud to hear you admit yourself

my countrywoman," said I, "not to feel surprised that Monsieur de Charney should be disposed to renounce his claims in my favour. But in my own country, marriage with a foreigner would scarcely deprive an Englishwoman of her birthright."

"You mistake me.—I am English by birth, as well as marriage!" replied Albertine. "My father and mother were emigrants."

"I ought, certainly, to have surmised that English was your native language," cried I, with more gallantry than truth,—for she spoke it with a pretty little helpless lisp, more charming than the pure enunciation of a Siddons or an O'Neill. "But how are we to forgive your refusing to revisit the land, to which, by a double tie, you are united?"

As she made no answer, restrained perhaps by feelings she cared not to confide to a stranger, —to break the awkward silence that ensued, I began prating about London and its improvements—England and its superiorities—in a style to do honour to the leading article of a country newspaper; flattering myself, of course,

that I was repeating the tirade by which my own ears had been dazzled by Charley Roxborough. But, alas! it was only a Birmingham imitation; the *terra-cotta* copy of a marble!—

"Sir Robert Hawley must surely have commissioned you," replied my hostess, "to second his pressing invitation to me to pass next winter with him in England!"

An involuntary smile traversed my features. Cunning old guardian! How ill-concealed were his matrimonial designs against us both!

"Had he afforded me the least hint of such a project," said I, with a look intended to be killing, "I should have shown myself less lukewarm in the delivery of his letter. But is there the slightest hope of your compliance?"

Without raising her face from the embroidery, which had not left her hand since my arrival, Mrs. Hawley shook her head.

"Though English-born, I am Frenchwoman enough at heart," said she, "to prefer the sight of trees when green, and rivers when flowing. Frozen streams, and leafless woods, would be a

poor exchange for the busy hum of Paris, and my uncle's sociable circle."

"I will not pretend that Yorkshire is able to afford the glitter and tumult of Paris," was my piqued reply. "But, as regards sociability, believe me nothing in France—nothing on the whole continent, vies with the cordial hospitality of our country life."

Mrs. Hawley smiled incredulously. But she looked so pretty when she smiled,—her fair ringlets glistened so brightly when she shook her head, and so soft a bloom overspread her almost girlish cheek, that I forgave her for differing from me in opinion.

"You forget," said she, "that *my* notions of England are derived from one who had little reason to think of her with partiality,—my banished father-in-law!—You will find, too, a most unfavourable impression produced on the continent by your Queen's trial.—There was something so base, so un-English, in the system pursued towards her!"

"It would be exacting too much of a King," I retorted, "to expect him to renounce his

prerogative on a point where all men play the Sultan when they can; *i. e.* getting rid of a wife they detest — and who deserves to be detested."

"I am not qualified to enter into the question of her merits;" she mildly replied. "That she was a woman, and unfortunate—above all, that she has paid with her life the penalty of her errors—must prevent those of her own sex from casting a stone at her. But the trial formed a ready text for the French, already irritated against England by the sufferings of the Emperor. I warn you of this, Mr. Wrottesley, only to excuse certain prejudices which you will often find it hard to contend against."

I was about to talk big about taking care that such prejudices did not betray themselves in my presence, when a reminiscence of the high-bred mildness of Count Max de Charney suddenly recurred to my mind, (as a fragrant gale from afar, sometimes reaches one at sea,) which smoothed down my Bobadil demonstrations.

"Even in my own family," added Mrs.

Hawley, "which would otherwise be a most united one, national antipathies run high. My uncle, with whom you are already acquainted, is as moderate as becomes every man of enlightened mind. Though he resigned an important post on the accession of the Bourbons, he has thankfully enjoyed the public tranquillity arising from their restoration; and never allows party politics to be discussed at his table. But women are not always so wise, in their generation. My aunt, the Comtesse de Valmoré, who is kind enough to officiate as my chaperon whenever I appear in the world, has a *guignon* against England and the English, which I often find the source of painful moments and embarrassments. A little jealous of my position in this house, she affects never to have forgiven her sister's having united her only daughter with an Englishman; and having no children to occupy her attention, and being, I sincerely believe, affectionately interested in my destinies, what she most apprehends is, that, once acquainted with my poor husband's family, I may be induced to settle in England, instead

of forming (as she wishes), a high alliance in this country."

A pretty cool *exposé*, truly, of her family secrets! I longed to whisper to the fair Albertine, how little characteristic of her birthplace was such indelicate reserve. But even *she* seemed to think it wanted apology.

"I apprize you of these facts," said she, "because, as I hope we shall see a great deal of you during your sojourn in Paris, I wish you to be *au fait* to our politics. In every Englishman with whom I converse, Madame de Valmoré beholds an enemy come to carry off her favourite niece and her brother's fortune, to the country which fought the battle of Waterloo, and denies the infallibility of the Pope."

"You have many English acquaintances, then?" said I, a little disappointed.

"Very few; but only such as I prize;—connections of my poor husband, or persons with whom we became acquainted in Italy. To most of these, my aunt is inexcusably ungracious. There is a Mr. Stormont—"

"Reginald Stormont?" said I, interrupting her.

"Reginald Stormont,—who having renewed his acquaintance with me one night last winter at the English Embassy, was almost insulted by Madame de Valmoré."

"In that instance, at least, she made proof of good taste," was my bitter reply.

"You know Mr. Stormont, then?"

"He is well known to my family."

"In that case you will admit that his social position is unexceptionable?"

"And his conduct as inconsistent as his manners are flighty! But forgive me for inquiring," said I, on perceiving a flush of displeasure tinge her cheek, "why, in your independent position, you subject yourself to the control of one whose tastes and opinions differ so widely from your own?"

"Madame de Valmoré is the only member of my family young enough to mix much with the world," she replied; "and I should be restricted entirely to the somewhat grave society

of this house, but for her kindness in serving as my *chaperon*."

"But what possible occasion for a *chaperon?*" cried I. "In England, a married woman would be laughed at for appearing with such an appendage."

"Surely not under such circumstances as mine?" pleaded the gentle widow. "Married before I was seventeen, my widowhood followed so closely, that, till last winter, when my family insisted on inaugurating me into the pleasures suitable to my age, I had never entered a ball-room! What would have become of one so inexperienced, had not Madame de Valmoré undertaken to introduce me into society? And though a somewhat severe duenna, her despotism is kindly intended. In this country," continued the fair Albertine, "a fortune such as mine, with my uncle's inheritance in perspective, creates as many suitors as the beauty of the Venus de Medicis."

Again, the lady's coolness threw me a little out of my perpendicular. All I could stammer in reply was, that "forewarned was forearmed;

and that she could be in no great danger from assiduities she knew to be interested."

"In no *danger*," said she, "but often in great embarrassment; on which account, the duennaship of my aunt is an invaluable resource. Pray tell Sir Robert Hawley when you return to England," she continued, with an unembarrassed smile, as, at that moment, her uncle and his venerable *aides-de-camp* appeared at the extremity of the lawn, "that the first *tête-à-tête* enjoyed by his grandson's widow since she became her own mistress, was with the fellow-countryman he recommended to her friendship. It must not be the last, however," continued she, with a winning smile; "for a natural alliance between us seems created by the name of Wrottesley."

What would I not have given for courage to assume, in my reply, the air with which Charley Roxborough leaned into the carriage of the lady whom he had chosen to describe as the widow of an Irish Primate! But Mrs. Hawley's good breeding kept me in check. I should as soon have dreamed of undue liberty with *her* as with

one of the stone Victories that guard the Tuileries court-yard. I had not even presence of mind, when the old gentlemen in black shorts and shoe-buckles reached the spot where we were seated, to attempt my premeditated announcement that I must now hurry back to dine at Paris. There was something so little priggish about them,—something so mild and indulgent,—that it would have been an act of pure cowardice to insult the whole Institut and Académie de Lettres in their persons.

Moreover if, at my former visit, regarding me as a little over-dressed and a little *supercoquentieux*, they had assumed towards me the dignity of their gray hairs, it was only from ranking me among the thousand English puppies, who, with their eyes half open, overrun the continent;—squabbling in cafés, and creating disturbances in theatres.—But no sooner had Sire Hawley's letter announced me to Albertine as one of the great landlords of the great county,—in possession of "450,000 *francs de rente*," a princely revenue, of which in the vast kingdom of France there

are perhaps not a hundred examples,—than they began to admire the modesty with which I had made my appearance at Les Epines and entered into the beauties of its scanty flower-plots and an acre or two of luzerne.

I was Kotoo-ed accordingly to the top of my bent. In a country where marriage is "dealt with by attorneyship," or rather exclusively arranged by a couple of families who put two people together by the simple process of putting two and two together, the little conclave of silver shoe-buckles settled among themselves that Sire Hawley was bent upon uniting his grand-daughter's thousands per annum with the thousands per annum of his ward; thereby creating one of the monster fortunes peculiar to English commoners and grandees of Spain. And though such an arrangement would deprive their fireside circle of a being whom even *they* could not but regard as far too fair and bright for her present position, a great *parti* is so dazzling a thing in the abstract, to *bourgeois* eyes, that they were unanimous in their desire to do honour to the young stranger, who was to

be the means of endowing Monsieur Des Auliers' niece with *un million de rentes!*

As yet, I had never received full change for my "millions." Except in my own family and among billiard-markers, my consequence had not been fairly acknowledged. Gripham made it his policy to keep me down,—Charles Roxborough his pleasure; while my friend Hampden regarded me as at best a species of *parvenu.* It was therefore refreshing to find every guinea of my rent-roll for once properly quoted, and every shilling of every guinea estimated at its full value. The old gentlemen had lived through too many years of their lives not to know, to the discredit of the proverb, that, as times go, house and land are better than learning; or rather, that it is not till house and land are gone and spent, learning is found to be most ex-cel-lent. The highest annual pension enjoyed by the most erudite *savant* of them all, did not equal my month's income!

Not having dined, however, the fumes of the incense offered to me were insufficient to prevent my yearning after the grosser *fumet* of

Véry's soup and cutlets; and it was at least some consolation, when forced by sheer hunger to take leave and go home and dine, that Mrs. Hawley seized an opportunity to acquaint me with the number of her box at the Académie Royale, and that, on Thursday nights, she was a punctual attendant.

It will readily be believed that I drove back to Paris in far better humour with myself than the preceding week. Like Crabbe's hero in the "Lover's Journey," I was already beginning to discern that nothing could be pleasanter or more practicable than the road to Sceaux!

CHAPTER XI.

Venez après cela crier d'un ton de maître
Que c'est le cœur humain qu'un auteur doit connaître,
Toujours le cœur humain pour modèle et pour loi!
Le cœur humain de qui?—Le cœur humain de quoi?
Celui de mon voisin a sa manière d'être,
Mais, morbleu, comme lui, j'ai mon cœur humain, moi.

DE MUSSET.

THE first day's waking of a new sovereign, or newly-appointed minister, can hardly be fraught with brighter illusions than the first *réveil* of a man under the excitement of a new passion.—Every object he looks upon is viewed through the rainbow-tinted medium of a prism; every breath of air he inhales seems laden with gales from Paradise; every vista into the future appears to terminate in a sunset halo of purple and gold. Poor fool!—What a bewildering

holiday of pleasant sights and sounds to diversify his work-a-day life!—

Already I subscribed without reserve to the assertion of the old gentlemen in spectacles, that Albertine Hawley was the most charming person in the world. Car Roxborough was a pleasing, amiable girl,—but decidedly provincial in tone and deportment. The Stormonts, if piquant and pretty, were forward and affected. While the beautiful and high-bred Lady Margaret Hampden was cold enough to freeze the marrow in one's bones.

But Albertine was not only prettier than the prettiest of them, but high-bred as the haughtiest; uniting the feminine gentleness of poor Car with an airy elegance,—a "grace beyond the reach of art," which nothing but Parisian training ever bestows. She was so prepossessing,—so conciliating,—had at once so much taste and *naïveté*, that one should as soon have thought of finding fault with a flower for its colour, or a bird for its song, as of censuring any thing it pleased her to say or do.

Even qualities which ran some risk of being

quoted as defects, in *her* case. turned to favour and prettiness. Her hair and complexion, for instance, exhibited a degree of fairness such as an habitual carper might have denounced as insipid. But this total absence of colour served only to enhance the beauty of her large grey eyes, fringed with exuberant lashes and over-arched by eyebrows of a pale chesnut; and the full redness of a mouth of such exquisite proportions, that one could have wished it ever closed but for the pearls disclosed by its slightest discomposure, and the pleasant words to which it delighted in giving utterance. I am afraid I am growing a trifle more poetical, dear reader, than beseems the era of steam machinery. But it is difficult to make a sober-suited British public understand the charm of such a creature. Among its wives and daughters are many, perhaps, as fair and good. Not one,—no, not one, —who, being thus good and fair, would stoop as *she* did, and as almost every Frenchwoman will do, to embellish her demeanour by studied suavity, and her person by the nicest care. From head to foot,—from the bend of her

salutation to the dimple of her smile,—nothing like defect was perceptible.

Under the influence of the new passion fluttering through my being like the life-blood throbbing in every vein, I could hardly fail to revert with regret to the idiotic prodigality which had so completely emptied my purse. Fain would I have had at my disposal the gold of Ophir and pearls of Ormus, to pave the way under the feet of Albertine. Instead of which, I could not so much as command a new equipage to appear at Les Epines in a style suitable to my fortune.

That my renouncement of equipage and show constituted my chief merit in the eyes of its circle, by assigning me the credit of a philosophical greatness of mind very far above my deserts, I was not likely to surmise; and to have held just then in my hand but one of the tens of thousands I had squandered, would have made my heart leap for joy. Even as it was, I was not much to be pitied. Mrs. Hawley's invitation to me to visit her at the opera, in spite of a *revêche* aunt and Counts Max innu-

merable, had extinguished all my aspirings after Baden. The thermometer might have risen ten degrees, and the crisped leaves of the chesnut trees of the Tuileries been done brown by the heat; and I should still have maintained to Nestor Platicheff and certain others of the northern diplomats, who talked of being iced every morning at Tortoni's lest they should dissolve in the course of the day, that Paris was one of the coolest cities in the world.

It was rather too hot to hold me, however, when, on the morning which was to be crowned by a second evening spent with Albertine, Charles Roxborough's answer to my letter was placed in my hand! Not only did my *soi-disant* friend insist on the performance of my engagement; but informed me that, lest my absence from England should encourage my guardian and his solicitor to interfere in the business, he had already laid the copy of my promise before Sir Robert Hawley.

"Holding your word as sacred as my own," wrote he, "I have long promised the advowson of Rainham to the brother of one of my most

intimate friends, who has in consequence relinquished other prospects of preferment; and you must pardon me for refusing to violate a pledge so solemn. I feel a little hurt, my dear Wrottesley, by your suggestion of the mere possibility of such a breach of faith. An honest man's word is his bond."

Nothing, in short, could be more evident than his determination to make me abide by mine. And thus, by no fault of my own, save that of possessing at nineteen years of age a head not Glenlivet-proof, I was to be made the instrument of gross injustice towards young Temple,—of irreparable cruelty to poor Caroline,—and above all, of mortification and disappointment to the venerable friend whose generous dealings with myself demanded far different requital!

But there was no help for it. Charles Roxborough held in his hands the means of immediate vengeance, should I provoke a final rupture. The Jews by whom for the next six months I must be maintained, were his creatures; while such was the influence in society,

of this bland, witty, agreeable, well-dressed man of the world, that he had only to unite the word scamp with my name in certain circles, or even to shake his head with an air of mistrust when I was talked of, to secure my ostracism. In that day, so omnipotent was the influence exercised in club and coterie by one or two of the high priests of fashion, that the throne itself was not secure from an interdict.

But though I saw that the presentation of Rainham was a lost case, I wanted courage to confess it to Sir Robert Hawley. He had often been my father-confessor. I had been forced, on many occasions, to accuse myself of prodigality, vice, and folly.—But I had never failed in my word. And how could I hope that any one who had not witnessed the orgies of Glenhama, nay, who in the course of his well-regulated life, had, perhaps, never been exalted by wine, should credit that my hand could have written what was wholly unrecognized by my mind? Even *I*, could scarcely believe it; and was a greater stretch of credulity to be expected of an indifferent party? At all events, as Roxborough

had taken upon himself to apprize the executor of the Wrottesley estate that the living was promised, there was no occasion for an immediate answer. Better redeem myself from *one* delinquency in the eyes of Hawley Chase, by improving my intimacy with Albertine, before I announced this new defalcation!

I suspect I was no loser by the weight overhanging my spirits. I entered the theatre that night as much subdued as by one of Adela Roxborough's brow-beatings; and instead of hurrying to Mrs. Hawley's box, as the preceding night I had lain awake projecting, took my place quietly in my *stalle de balcon;* affecting a deep interest in the *entrechats* of Brocard, only to gain time and composure.

Dear ladies—dear English ladies! who have so many little books, tabby-bound, gilt-edged, and didactic, written for your learning, who are taught in sections and chapters by the starched aprons and lawn sleeves of your own sex, how to behave in the capacity of maids, wives, and widows,—how to choose your husbands, in girlhood, and as matrons, your lump-sugar and

sirloins of beef,—how to train your children and your housemaids, so as to spare neither rod nor broom,—who are documented, in short, in plausible common-place, till not a movement of your body, or impulse of your mind, is left to the glorious instincts of heaven's bestowing—forgive an old bachelor for suggesting, among all this load of lectures, a single hint;—frivolous enough, I admit, but let me hope *not* vexatious, which you are entreated to lay to your hearts.

Dear countrywomen, in spite of the time and money you waste upon your toilet, believe me, you are the worst dressed angels in Europe! I hear your *gros de naples* rustle with indignation at the suggestion.—I see your brows knit, and your fair shoulders shrugged to your ears. But if any man save myself dare tell you a word of truth, he would join with me in replying to these peevish demonstrations,—"be as angry as you please; but so it is!"

I know all you can urge; that you are costumed by milliners, dress-makers, shoemakers, and perfumers, as French as French

can be; that Mesdames Laure and Louise, Messieurs Melnotte, Isidore, and Houbigant, supply the dress I do not scruple to denounce as detestable. But if it be for the captivation of the rougher sex you adorn yourselves, trust me, that half your efforts, according to the axiom of Hesiod, would be more than the whole. You do a great deal too much. You gild refined gold, and paint the lily. You overload yourselves with finery, when simplicity should be the order of the day; and unveil a far larger portion of your beauty than it is good to exhibit to eyes profane.

When you protest that from the days of Queen Bess to those of Queen Victoria, your fashions, like your farces, have been "taken from the French,"—better say at once *mis*-taken;" for never was grosser misapplication! The galas of the Court of France occur in January, the *fêtes* of the English season, in June; yet the fashions invented for the glorification of the one, are transferred, errors not excepted, to the account of the other. And what a sorry sight, to behold an English dow-

ager, at a summer drawing-room, sinking under robes of satin and a train of brocade *lamé* with gold, or flounced with heavy *guipure*, her brows fevered by a ponderous turban :—a costume fit for the encounter of frost and snow, rather than for the moment when even the airy blossoms of the acacia and laburnum appear too heavy for the branches whereon they are waving!

In utter insensibility to fitness of time and place, morever, you, the purest and chastest of Europe's maids and matrons, do not scruple to appear in public theatres, crowded with rabble, (from females to whom it were sacrilege to allude, to the link-boy, who, previous to shouting for your carriage in the street, surveys your charms from the gallery), in the self-same dress devised by its Parisian inventors to exhibit fair shoulders and naked arms, to those privileged by consanguinity of blood and parity of rank, to gaze and to admire; husbands, fathers, brothers, friends, restrained by the reverence of kindred feeling from unseemly comment.

Again, I say, pardon me! I am speaking

freely. But all I want, as George I. used to say to his loving subjects, "is your goods." And had you studied, as I have, the exquisite *demie-toilette* of the Parisians, you would admit that the half-high muslin gown, with long sleeves, and the glossy hair without an ornament, in which Albertine presented herself to the recognition of my opera-glass on the night in question, was in far better taste, according to the season and scene of our meeting, than the ponderous trinkets, necklaces, bracelets, combs, and earrings,—the garlands of artificial flowers, and silken dresses, loaded with trimmings,—with which, at that very moment, my mistaken country-women were endeavouring to outshine the gas-lights, in an atmosphere of 90° of Fahrenheit, at the crowded Opera House in the Haymarket.

I admit this tirade to be a digression. But if my readers ever perused an account of the execution of the gallant Cinq Mars, and thrilled with indignation, when, as the noblest of Richelieu's victims was addressing his salutations to the throng ere he laid his head upon the block,

his *valet-de-chambre* thrust into his face, on the point of a lance, his weekly "small account," for shoe-strings, blacking, and pipe-clay, (which the young hero about to be launched into eternity had forgotten to discharge,) they will, perhaps, allow me the plea conceded to the serving-man, that what is acceptable at no time, may as well be tendered at one moment as another.

Of this I am certain; that had any man among my readers, beheld the snow-white freshness of her dress, cool and delicate as a newly-blown white rose amidst its foliage, he would have admitted that its unlustrous surface served to enhance the bloom of her youthful complexion, as much as the modesty of its drapery, the respect of her adorers.

I have often heard my English friends exclaim against the dowdy aspect of the Parisian theatres, and assign the palm of brilliancy to our own. But may it not constitute one among the many causes of the decline of our national drama, that the theatres are *too* brilliant; that people go there to be seen, rather than to listen;

that the display in the boxes distracts public attention from the stage, and gives rise to the disturbance of a running fire of discussion.

As I sat gazing from afar off on the spotless beauty of Albertine, muttering between my teeth the words of the old madrigal,

> Have you seen but a white lily blow,
> Before rude hands have clutch'd it;
> Have you seen but the fall of the snow,
> Before the soil hath smutch'd it;

and wondering whether the silvery texture of an angel's wing ever showed more dazzling fair, I could not resist an occasional glance at the prim visage of Madame la Comtesse de Valmoré, in whom I foresaw a dangerous antagonist.

She was a woman of that "certain age" which is the chartered date of chaperons; richly dressed, and of a countenance more imposing than prepossessing. One seldom sees an Englishwoman of any time of life, exhibit the harsh lines and decided expression of mouth, which impart so disagreeable a character to the thin

face of a Parisienne; particularly if a *maîtresse femme*, or the wife of an influential placeman. About such a woman, there is something horribly governmental. "A brow like Mars, to threaten and command"—a cold scrutinizing glance—a compressed lip, indicative of a soul that should have been a tax-gatherer's, and a heart that should have been a surgeon's,—combine with an accurate knowledge of etiquette, and perfect command of countenance and gesture, to render a woman of this description a more stringent visitation than the nightmare.

I had allowed two *entr'actes* to pass without stirring from my place, so great was my awe of Madame de Valmoré's stony countenance; when, just as the third act of the opera of La Vestale was beginning, there glided into the box a man whose face was strange to me, but whose presence could not be strange to its inmates; for after a silent salutation to both, he assumed a seat immediately behind Albertine, and fixed his attention on the stage.

Though not a syllable was exchanged between

them, I felt dissatisfied. He was far nearer to Mrs. Hawley than I was content to see any man so young and good looking. Nor had he been ten minutes seated, before my jealous quick-sightedness perceived a deeper bloom overspread the delicate cheek of Albertine; as is invariably the case with a woman in presence of one who holds undue influence over her feelings. Though her attitude was unchanged, and though not a word had been spoken, I could see that she was happier than before. I might have guessed as much! Who but her foolish old uncle, enamoured of his auriculas, ranunculuses, and prize tulips,—who but the chorus of half-witted, purblind, graybeards by whom she was surrounded,—could have imagined that mere love of music would take a woman of her age from her quiet occupations and pleasant home, to be jolted for miles and miles over a vile *chaussée!*

As to decyphering in the countenance of Madame de Valmoré *her* dispositions towards the new comer, one might as well have attempted to interpret the marble face of a

Sphinx! The less the notice taken of the stranger, however, the more he seemed at home among them, and the greater my displeasure. He was so placed that I could not catch a full view of him. But the profile that protruded from behind Mrs. Hawley's filmy sleeve, was handsome as that of the Antinous.

My curiosity having by this time got the better of both timidity and discretion, the moment the crash of the orchestra signalized the finale of the act, I hurried round the house to make my way to the box; when, just as I reached the last step of the staircase leading to the second circle, a well dressed young man brushed past me, who was either the genius of a whirlwind or the identical individual whom I had just seen seated within seven-eighths of an inch of Mrs. Hawley's graceful shoulder!

On reaching their box, however, his place was not empty; though from the compliments which the individual who occupied it was addressing to Madame la Comtesse, I was confirmed in my belief that he had recently taken his seat.

Perhaps it was to the mollifying influence of those very compliments, I was indebted for the unexpectedly gracious manner in which the chaperon acknowledged my introduction; or, perhaps, she did not care that Prince Zriny, by which name the stranger was addressed by Albertine, should perceive that any man dared venture into her presence who was not entitled to a welcome. It did not much signify. Her civility sanctioned my remaining,—which was all I wanted.

The Prince, I suspect, wanted it as much as myself; for I soon found him to be one of the many merry mountebanks who are lost without the presence of a *plastron* against whom they may exercise their lunging. If in some degree a disciple of Charley Roxborough's supercilious school, he had the advantage over the English exclusive that his impertinence was more amusing. *His* contempts were not conveyed by a mere smile of conscious superiority.

"And how did you like my country?" inquired Mrs. Hawley, who had already apprized me by a few words that Zriny, a high-born

Hungarian and one of the Austrian *attachés*, in Paris, had been spending the season in London.

"Above all things!" was his frank reply; "your country needs only to be peopled with my country people, to be delightful. You, *chère* Madame Hawley, who owe your birth and not your breeding to a soil which furnishes the coldest clay of the habitable globe, cannot expect me to be in very enthusiastic ecstacies with the dolls stuffed with bran whom, by courtesy, you call your countrywomen. But I delight in the green suburbs and superb river that vivify your leaden city. Whenever I found my spirits weighed down by loads of lordly magnificence, whether in pragmaticality or plate—speeches or equipages,—away I used to drive to the depths of Greenwich or summit of Richmond Hill,—to refresh my soul by a bath of verdure such as no other country can produce; or by watching the huge Indiamen heave up the Thames, bringing to Cheapside their tribute of myrrh, aloes, and cassia, like the kings

of Arabia and Saba, and the princes of Tarsus."

Unprivileged to check his sauciness, the utmost I could do was to distort my indignant features into a sneer *à la* Roxborough, purporting that it was not with *such* views Richmond and Greenwich were usually visited by gallants of his age.

Mrs. Hawley seemed to understand better how to parry his passes; by immediately placing him on what, to a foreigner, is apt to prove inferior ground.

"I think I understood," said she, "that your visit to England was dedicated less to the turf you prize as green, than the turf where to be green is dangerous? Your friends of the English embassy assured me that Epsom, Ascot, and Goodwood were your temptations to cross the channel?"

"And alas! the chief causes of hastening me back again!" exclaimed the *attaché*. "Will you believe that, born and bred among horses on our Transylvanian estates, till I sometimes

fancy myself a species of centaur, I believed myself so tolerable a judge, as to trust to my wn discernment in making up my book. No one had been kind enough to warn me that every quadruped entered to run has five legs instead of four; and that the fifth leg attached to it, *i.e.*, *the* leg, is the one it runs on! In a word, I was what you English call, 'regularly done!'"

"The turf," I ventured to observe, (though I had better have held my peace, for a man will bear fifty reproofs from a woman where one that issues from whiskered lips is insupportable,) —"the turf is brought, in England, to the perfection of a science; and what man in his senses, would expect to become a first rate chemist or astronomer by the mere force of ambition?"

"I will not pretend to guess your interpretation of the word science, my dear Sir," retorted the Prince, speaking such excellent English in exchange for my indifferent French, that I could have brained him. "But it strikes me that the

turf, as at present constituted, is confoundedly more like a trade. My notion of fair betting upon fair racing is, that with a perfect knowledge of the merits of the running horses, no man to whom race-courses are familiar, ought to be far at fault. But it seems that, in England, you must know a horse's owner and trainer as well as its build, wind, and courage, before you can venture to back it."

"In all countries," said I, tartly, "dishonest men are to be found; and the outcasts who, on the continent, become *chevaliers d'industrie*, are apt in England to take to the calling of a black leg."

"And against *such* scoundrels," retorted the Prince, "one is fully on one's guard. But what one does *not* prepare for, what (as one of the equestrian order) I should be sorry to prepare for,—is the rogueishness of the friend who, after sharing one's cutlets at the Clarendon or turtle at the Albion, picks one's pockets with as little remorse as the veriest hang-dog born with Newgate in perspective, as much his

birthright as the Tuileries that of a Bourbon, or Windsor Castle that of the Prince of Wales."

"With whom can you have been living, my dear Prince," exclaimed Mrs. Hawley, with ill-repressed indignation, "to have imbibed such notions of my countrymen?"

"*D'abord, ma chère dame,*" replied Zriny, "I was unlucky with the letters you gave me. Your Mr. Stormont was at Malta: — your Sire Hawley was a fossil. The only available introduction I took with me were, first, a line from your ambassador to the Foreign Office, which procured me the worst dinner I ever tasted, and a supper after the opera given by a slipshod Viscountess, a fourth part of whom would have constituted a handsome woman, had she been less flagrantly addicted to small beer."

"Oh! fie, fie, fie!" interrupted the Countess de Valmoré, who had been listening with an air of disgust.

"I appeal to Monsieur," cried the cool

Hungarian, looking at me straight between the eyes, "whether such be not notoriously the case?"

And as it was by no means my cue to admit that the politics of West-end fashion were to me more than hieroglyphical, I could only bow my assent to a scandal applying to I really knew not whom.

"My only resource, therefore," resumed the Prince, "was my charming cousin, Princess E., who lives surrounded by every thing that London fashion delights in,—people to whom, as in gratitude bound, I was inclined to bow to the earth,—for their indulgence in treating as young and beautiful a woman who has scarcely been either for the last ten years."

"Oh! fie, fie, fie!" again ejaculated Madame de Valmoré, (somewhat more than a contemporary of the charming Princess in question!) But Zriny proceeded undismayed.

"Thanks to the kinswomanly hand she extended towards me, therefore," said he, "I worked my way into the very heart of the

jockey set. It was there I became acquainted with Tom Howard, Charley Roxborough, Lord James Hillingdon, and others, whose genius as sporting men is impressed upon my mind to the amount of ten thousand ducats!"

Poor fellow! Had he not been a confounded foreigner, I should almost have pitied him: so thoroughly could I enter into the misery of being a lamb in the lion's den.

"I dined one day at —— House," he continued, "the week preceding Ascot, and was surprised,—almost disgusted,—to find nothing talked of but the odds. Here, as in Vienna, such would be the case among men, at a supper or breakfast party. But at a table where young and beautiful women predominated, surely some better topic might have been found!"

"If such were the leading interest of the men present," observed Mrs. Hawley, with more philosophy than I expected under a muslin gown, "it was kinder to discuss it freely, than put such a constraint upon their

inclinations as would have made them feel the ladies *de trop*, and rejoice when they left the room."

"At all events," cried Zriny, "I who, knowing nothing of the horses, had little interest in the race, could not help feeling that the eagerness with which even these blue-eyed angels listened to discussions about physicking and sweating a horse, was indicative of most ignoble *penchants*. I doubt whether a company of petty merchants would have stooped (if met for festive purposes) to squabble over the value of their puncheons of sugar or cargoes of hides, as I heard certain lords and ladies of what we are accustomed to call the most enlightened aristocracy in Europe, dispute and wrangle over their bets."

Not choosing to sit by and hear my country people abused, however justly, I attempted some stupid generality about the privileges to be accorded to racing, as a manly sport,—a gentlemanly and even noble pursuit.

"A pursuit which certainly affords temporary

excitement to the least amusable of mankind," cried Zriny, "and *that* is no trifling recommendation. As to its manliness, hunting, if you please, is a manly sport; for there a man risks no neck or limbs but his own. But to pay other people for desperately riding certain horses, which you have bred to such perfection of speed as to be unfit for any purpose but the turf, may be a good speculation for those who are too proud to deal in any other commodity than horseflesh; but I see nothing *manly* in the trade! The prejudices of society apart, one might as well make money as a grazier!"

"If you talked thus in England," said Mrs. Hawley, with a smile, "I am afraid you passed for a shocking heretic!"

"*A Rome, comme à Rome. Il faut hurler avec les loups!* And when, a few days afterwards, the races came off, and I discovered by the tens of thousands that changed hands within a quarter of an hour, the necessity that those who chose to embark their fortunes in such a spec should at least understand the prin-

ciples of their calling, I could better excuse the Egerias of the racing stable, who knew the interests of their children and credit of their lords to be risked upon the issue of what a rogueish or drunken groom might decide to his liking!"

"Most of the English noblemen engaged on the turf," said I, swelling with bootless indignation, "possess fortunes of a magnitude to render their losses comparatively indifferent."

"Pardon me! The wrangling at —— House led me to form very different conclusions! Are you acquainted with Lord Barner?" said he, beginning to surmise that he was talking to a snob.—"Or Lord James Hillingdon, or Sir Thomas Howard?" naming certain individuals by whom Newmarket and the Jockey Club were then held in thrall. "In that case," continued the Prince, on receiving my embarrassed negative, "believe the eyes that have seen and ears that have heard the disputes of that supreme conclave,—that many of them shave as close the abyss of ruin, every successive Derby and

Leger, as the wretchedest stock jobber going, when rumours of wars distract the money market!"

"Let us hope," said Albertine, as if longing to support my antagonism, if she only knew how, "that an imperfect knowledge of our customs and language may have led you into exaggerated conceptions."

"Facts are stubborn things, *ma chère dame!*" cried the Prince, more warmly. "Of those with whom I dined at —— House, and who were pointed out to me as of a race ennobled before the days of Magna Charta, *one* has since levanted, and is now skulking about the streets of Paris, ashamed to look at his own face in the looking-glass; another, young Roxborough, who with an allowance of a few hundreds a year from his family, has seldom less than twenty thousand pounds on the Derby, would have been a defaulter, had not his friends come forward in his behalf; while the family of a third was lately molested by having a coroner's inquest held in the house; his valet-de-chambre, (*tel*

maître, tel valet,) having made so bad a book as to be forced to shoot himself on the eve of settling-day!"

"But, my dear Prince," interrupted Madame de Valmoré, "you do not want, I hope, to persuade us that the whole aristocracy of England are slaves of an inferior animal? When, in my youth, I visited London, high play was the order of the day. But even above *that*, the greatest of excitements, the interest of politics prevailed. In the days of Whigs and Tories, (who I am told, have ceased to exist), party spirit carried all before it,—even beyond hazard and loo. Of course you were present at a Parliamentary debate?"—

"For my sins, *chère Comtesse*, yes!" retorted the Prince; "and felt much as poor Visconti must have done, when surveying the gallery of the Louvre after the *chefs-d'œuvre* of the ancient masters enumerated in his catalogue were removed, and restored to their rightful owners. Conceive a flight of sparrows, bearing lucifer-matches in their beaks to simulate the eagle of

Jove with his thunderbolt!—Think of Pitt, Fox, and Windham, replaced by the Irish Secretary, who puts his hand in his breeches pockets, like a crocodile;—by Sidmouth, from whose pocket one always expects to see the end of a halter hanging out—by old Liverpool, with his lordly garter bracing his pantaloons (facetiously said to represent two French cities—Too-long, and Too-loose);—or by Canning, who, like the Satyr in the fable, blows hot and cold in a breath! There was a smart lawyer—a vulgar fellow with desperate pretensions to be a fine gentleman, to whom the *beau monde* made up to obtain the disposal of his patronage,—said to be a discarded favourite of a court where all is favouritism, who—"

Sir John Leach, and myself, were luckily spared his further impertinence!—Even the tedious *entr'actes* of a foreign theatre cannot last for ever; and on the first tap of the *chef d'orchestre*, with a profound bow to Madame de Valmoré, and a more intimate salutation to her niece, the travelled chatter-box vanished.

I was whispering to myself that, *now*, the happiness and comfort of my evening were about to begin; when lo! my eyes were diverted from the fair face beside me, by the extraordinary contortions of a voluminous body which blocked up the entrance to the *balcon*, opposite our box;—an uncouth individual who stood mopping and mowing with the evident intention of attracting my notice.

By all that was vexatious,—Archdeacon Roxborough himself!—a man whom I as much expected to see in Paris, as the Wolds of Yorkshire removed from their foundations!—

Aware that he was capable of intruding into Madame de Valmoré's box, and disturbing, by his vociferous interruptions, all enjoyment of the performance, I lost no time in joining him.—Another moment, and we were hurrying together into the *foyer*.

CHAPTER XII.

The desire of power in excess, caused the angels to fall; the desire of knowledge in excess, caused man to fall. But in good-will towards our fellow-creatures, there is *no* excess. Neither can angel or man come in danger by it.

BACON.

How was the worthy old soul to surmise with what anguish of spirit I noted the hardly-repressed smiles that greeted on all sides his queerly-cut clerical coat and hat, and black silk stockings and gaiters, so unsuitable to our place of meeting—so incomprehensible to Parisians; who, had I expounded the business, by denouncing him as a minister of the Gospel, would, in those days of the elder Bourbons,

have been horror-struck at the sacrilege of his presence in such a spot.

"I was told at your hotel, (where I am putting up,) my dear boy," said he, "that I should find you at the opera. So, to lose no time, off I hurried, without so much as washing my hands!— But I knew twasn't the fashion, abroad, for people to go dressed to the theatres."—

"Except to the opera,"—said I, in a low voice, a hint purporting to make him as much ashamed of himself as I was of him.

"But you don't seem surprized to see me, Wrottesley?" cried he, little suspecting the feelings of mortification, which left no leisure for surprise. "Yet, I can tell you, Moore's Almanack itself might have announced to me, last week, that I should be here to-night: and, for once, I should have gainsayed the oracle!—"

"You are so fond of music, my dear Archdeacon," I was beginning, "that —"

"Music?" cried he, stopping short. "Why, you don't surely suppose that crotchets and

quavers brought me here to hunt you up? No, no! the case is just this. Five days ago, when I was dining at Hawley Chase, our poor old friend expressed himself so positively that a letter of his upon business, which you had failed to answer, could never have reached your hands, that I was ass enough to offer to take post and make the inquiry in person."

"And, in passing through London," said I, evading the question of the letter, "you, of course, dined with Charley?"

"I promise you I did no such thing! And don't be too sure you will ever hear of my breaking bread with him again!"—cried the Archdeacon, in progressive indignation. "I'm beginning to doubt whether there's a drop of his father's blood in the fellow's veins. My cousin Gratian may be a clodhopper; but hang me if any one ever charged him with being a rogue!"—

"Nor his son either, I should imagine," said I, "if he hoped to escape in whole skin!"

"I tell you what, Wrottesley," retorted my companion: "'tis a cowardly thing for one of my cloth to call names; and when my own right cheek receives a buffet, I can turn my left for another, as in vocation bound. But black coat or brown, I will not stand by to see a friend get a cuff in the face,—more particularly when that other party is a woman, and unable to stand up for her own."

"And still more particularly," I ventured to add, to show him I understood the drift of his allusions, "when the victim is a gentle feminine creature like poor Caroline, whom any man of honour and feeling would be proud of risking his life to defend."

"I'm glad to hear you say *that*, Harry!" cried my companion. "Give us your hand!—By Jove, I'm as glad as may be to hear you say that!—Half of my errand here seems already accomplished!"—

My answer was a sad and remorseful waive of the head.

"Don't put me out of heart before you've

heard my story," rejoined the Archdeacon, interpreting my gesture. "When you've heard how those poor girls have been used, *then* tell me you won't stretch out a helping hand to snatch poor Car out of an untimely grave if you dare!—I'll let you know in a few words how the land lies," he continued.—But already he had talked himself into such a state of excitement, that, between the heat of the gas-lamps and of his wrath, he was fain to lift his shovel-hat and wipe his bald head so sedulously, that, by way of sedative, it occurred to me to offer him an ice.

"An ice on an empty stomach?" cried he. "My service t'ye,—my service t'ye! Thanks to my spendthrift cousins, I have a creditor or two; and my life is not yet insured for their benefit. But if you could get me such a thing as a glass of claret-cup —"

Though eager to comply, I foresaw that even Tortoni, however versed in the vagaries of gastronomic Europe, would be scarcely up to the compounding of a potation almost as

anomalous as a glass of champagne-negus. But I was not sorry for a pretext to get him away from the theatre; and by the time we were installed in a quiet little *salon* at Tortoni's, I began to breathe again. My composure was not of long duration after his story commenced.

"Will you believe it, my dear Wrottesley," said he, "that Charley has the audacity to saddle upon *your* shoulders the break-up of his family! He talks of having backed you in bills to a tremendous amount, which have done up his credit with the Jews. That for eight or ten years past,—ever since he went to Cambridge, in short,—he has been draining his old gander of a father of every guinea he could command, is no secret to you. The girls were then at their samplers.—But as soon as I saw them growing up into good and sensible creatures, I warned them that money matters were going sadly amiss with Sir Gratian, to induce them to keep household matters within bounds. And so they did, bless them! without ever fretting

after London and its gim-crackery, like other girls of their age."

"The early engagement of *one* of them," said I, with some bitterness, "was a sufficient reason for *her* preferring Yorkshire to town."

"And was there no merit in adhering to that early engagement, in defiance of the attentions of the showy young Lords whom Charley every now and then brought down to the Elms, as a chance for his sisters?"—retorted the Archdeacon, giving as reprehensive a thump to the table before him, as though it were his pulpit-cushion. "The truth was, the young folks looked forward to a future home at Rainham, till Old Wrottesley's death threw them abroad again; and I confess to my shame, that, thinking the match a poor one for my cousin, I was not sorry to learn your determination not to hold yourself bound by the promise of your predecessor."

"The promise was never explained to me, either by the Temples or Sir Robert Hawley," interrupted I, "till I had pledged the living in another quarter."

"Yet the rector of your parish was surely the first person you came in contact with, on your arrival at Wrottesley?"—

"I dined with him immediately after the funeral; when he made mysterious allusions to Miss Roxborough's attachment,—but so vaguely that I was wholly in the dark. As to his brother, Dr. Temple never even mentioned his name."

"Just like his false delicacy!—The Doctor would not compromise his sense of dignity to gain a mitre!—Praiseworthy enough, perhaps, as regards himself.—But when the happiness of other people is at stake, I hold this sort of high-mightiness a most unchristian feeling! Why couldn't he tell you at once that old Wrottesley had promised the living to his brother, to whom Car Roxborough had promised her hand?—Instead of which, because she had twenty thousand pounds and Henry nothing, he was afraid of being accused of seeking to aggrandize his family,—as if such a benefice would not have placed his brother on a par with the girl he loved!—Bless my

soul and body!—It strikes me that if the happiness of a worthy young couple were dependent upon my own stiff-necked pride I would put it into my pocket with as little scruple as the Venetians used their patents of nobility whenever they set up as shopkeepers."

"But my dear Archdeacon," said I—(partly to divert his attention from the extraordinary mixture of Médoc, soda-water, capillaire, and clarified ice, placed before us by way of claret-cup) "surely there was a time when you regarded the two Temples with nearly as evil an eye as that cast upon them by Sir Gratian or his son?"

"Who denies it, pray,—who denies it?" cried he, smacking his lips with an indescribable wry face at the singular beverage with which he was making acquaintance. "The Doctor was too much of a kill-joy for me. I'm addicted, I own, to good living; whereas Temple cares for nothing but the living that makes good dying. I owed him a grudge for converting Wrottesley Hall into a sort of Sadler's Wells

La Trappe; convinced that he might have converted the old gentleman into a good Christian, without transforming him into a churl. However, as you may suppose, 'tisn't for Temple's sake I crossed the sea to dodge you out.—But when I consider how shamefully those poor girls have been dealt with —"

"By whom? — Their father or their brother?"—

"Their father as a fool;—their brother as a knave. Just as Lord John Jocelyn was about to take possession of the Elms, Charley contrived to get an execution put in for a debt of his for which Sir Gratian had made himself liable, to the tune of seven thousand pounds!"

"You say *contrived.* But are you certain my dear Archdeacon, that he could avoid it?"

"Do you think I'd accuse my own kith and kin unless I'd irrefragable proof of his turpitude?—Well, Sir! The thing was so managed as to fall a few days after Caroline's coming of age; when she obtained a sufficient command over her fortune to assign over the sum in

question for the release of her father's pictures and plate.—I have been fighting a hard battle for years, as their trustee, to keep their portions uninjured by so much as a chip.—But how was I to circumvent the underhand arrangements between Charles and Lord Fortrose; or such tricks as the one I have been describing? At all events, when I found poor Car thus robbed, I spoke out; and told both father and son that, so far from abetting any further their opposition to her match with Temple's brother, I should think her a lucky girl to obtain a protector against her nearest relations. A few months afterwards, Rainham fell in; when I hastened to speak my mind to Sir Robert Hawley."

To avoid hearing what sort of speaking such a mind had produced, I harked back to Fortrose.—"I could not understand," I said, "why Adela's match was to be regarded as a sacrifice!"

"You *would*, though, I can tell you," he frankly replied, "if you knew the poor girl's

contempt and aversion for men of her brother's stamp! Adela was made to be the loving wife of some honest, plain-dealing Squire; and refused that drunken fellow Fortrose again and again, till he ought to have been ashamed of asking her. But when her father explained to her in plain English, that his necessities had left them without house or home, and that the only roof left to shelter her and her sister was that of Fortrose Castle, who but must admire the self-government of the good girl in frankly avowing to the Earl how little he was indebted to her choice, while as frankly bestowing upon him her hand."

"A sad look-out for both!" said I, with a shudder, reflecting how easily such a case might have been my own, had no Henry Temple been beforehand with my pretensions to Caroline.

"I don't agree with you," retorted the Archdeacon. "So good a daughter, so excellent a sister, will make the best of wives. Adela has acted solely upon principle; and Fortrose is a lucky man to get her, even if her brother had

levied a heavier per centage on her dowry of twenty thousand pounds. But there has been a sad drawback on her wedded happiness—such as it is. The keen air of the Highlands seems to have completed what three years of trouble and anxiety too-well began; and poor Car is in a deep decline."

"All girls who are crossed in love, are said to be in a deep decline!" said I, with a peevish acerbity that reached no further than my lips.

"And now and then, prove so far gone in feminine perversity, as to die of it!"—sternly rejoined the Archdeacon. "Let us hope this one angel may be spared to us; for few so meek and faithful tread the earth."—

I knew it; but why was I to own it? Had she not preferred her rusty-suited tutor, to Wrottesley Park with all its splendour, including the fat venison, fine asparagus, and old hock, so dear to the recollections of the Archdeacon.

"I tell you what, Harry Wrottesley!" cried my companion, of a sudden, after gulping down his emotions and half a glass of the claret-cup.

"If you don't rescue this poor child, by securing Rainham to Henry Temple—"

"Well, Sir?" said I, calmly—perceiving that he paused—

"May you never sleep in your bed till the day that takes you to the one where all men find rest!" said he, more seriously than I expected. "Your predecessor at Wrottesley Hall promised him the living. He was educated for the Church expressly on the faith of that promise. His conduct, from his boyhood upwards, has been such as to do honour to his prospects. His brother's high reputation in the county, adds credit to his own. Your guardian asks of you, as a favour, to give him the living. The parish wishes it—your friends expect it of you.—Answer me, in a word!—Are we to shake you thankfully by the hand for your compliance, or are we not?"

"You are *not!*" said I, in a low, but firm, voice. "Sorely against my will, I have, this day, despatched a letter to Charles Roxborough, admitting myself pledged to submit to his nomi-

nation. And though I have appealed to him as strongly in favour of Henry Temple as though he were a brother of my own, we both know enough of him to be certain that he will be guided only by his own inclinations—"

"Or interest!"—added the Archdeacon, with knitted brows. "Are you quite sure, Wrottesley, there is no simony in the matter?—Are you quite sure that this advowson has not been made a new way to pay old debts?"—

"I do not understand you," said I.

"I mean," continued he, again forcibly impressing his opinion on the *toile cirée* of the table before him, "that the elder brother of young Whichcote (the future incumbent of Rainham,) is known to be one of Roxborough's most urgent creditors."

"Whichcote?" cried I, in a voice that carried its guarantee of unfeigned amazement—"you do not mean to say that it is to Tom Whichcote your cousin has promised the living?"—

"To whom else?" he rejoined—scarcely less astonished at my air of surprise. "Why, my

dear Wrottesley, the gift is said to be confirmed by a paper in your own handwriting!"

"Signed two years ago,—the name a blank! Independent of my desire to bestow this piece of preferment on Temple, believe me, I would as soon have Cribb or Aby Belasco settled at Rainham, as Tom Whichcote!—Tom Whichcote is my night-mare,—my utter aversion!"—

"Then pluck up a spirit, my lad, and late as it is in the day for opposition, send Charley and his claims no matter where, instead of risking the perdition of a parish of twelve thousand souls!"

"The more spirit I pluck up, my dear Archdeacon, said I, "the more my conscience must confirm the mischief created by my folly. Any engagement bearing my name is, and ought to be, binding. All I can do in atonement,—and I will do it cheerfully—is to bestow, on coming of age, and equally attested by my signature, a stipend of one thousand per annum on the curate of Wrottesley, on condition that

Dr. Temple nominates his brother to the office."

"And do you think so meanly of either of the Temples, as to fancy they would accept such an exchange?" cried the Archdeacon. "Do you think so ill of Car as that she would bestow her affections on a fellow capable of receiving a salary for doing nothing? No, no! since you're pledged, you're pledged. You must put up with the responsibility of having settled a hunting parson in one of the most important cures I know of;—and Caroline—"

"*And Caroline?*"—

"Must die—a poor broken-hearted creature, feeling herself in everybody's way—without a friend in this stony-hearted world to lend her a helping hand!"—

"And you can actually praise, as high-minded, the squeamishness which refuses what might preserve her from such a destiny?"

"The case is just this, Wrottesley; with time and patience, Henry Temple is certain of preferment from his college; and prudence suggests

that he had better keep his fellowship till he have wherewithal to keep a wife—perhaps a wife and children. It is only myself and Lady Fortrose, who, too fond of poor Car to be blind to the fact that her life is hanging on a thread, and that her last days might be made happy by a union with the man she loves, trusted all might be brought about by the falling-in of Rainham. However, all's up and over now! In spite of my break-neck speed, I see I have arrived too late. If you wrote to-day, confirming your promise, legal forms alone are wanting to make young Whichcote the shepherd of a most ill-fated flock.—So let's say no more about it; for further discussion could only be painful to both. My poor cousin Car must be otherwise taken care of."

He rose, while speaking, as if he wanted spirits to protract our conviviality. But as he had taken up his abode at Meurice's, it became a matter of course that we should walk home arm in arm.

"I am sorry to say, I must spend four-and-

twenty hours longer in a capital where they've such heterodox notions of claret-cup!" said he, as we took our way homewards. "I've a little commission to execute for Sir Robert."

"If I can be of the least use—" I was beginning—but he almost peevishly interrupted me with,

"No! I shall get on best alone! You're far too fine a gentleman to be burthened with such a pack-saddle as an old parson. By the way, if I'm not indiscreet, who was the pretty creature in whose box I was so lucky as to ferret you out to-night?—Never saw a sweeter countenance!—I hardly wonder at poor Car's being clean swept out of your mind by your foreign trip, if there are many such faces in Paris!"

"It is one you ought to have seen before this, in England," said I; "not so much because the lady is by birth, an Englishwoman—"

"I could have sworn it!"—interrupted the Archdeacon.

"As because," I gravely continued, enjoying

by anticipation his surprise,—" she happens to be the widow of the heir of Hawley Chase."

"*Mrs. Hawley?*" cried he, stopping short, and striking his walking-stick so stoutly on the then scanty pavement of the Rue de la Paix, that the soldiers at the *corps de garde* started forward to see what was the matter. "Why, 'tis with her, my dear fellow, lies my commission from Sir Robert! He bad me, on no account, quit Paris without an interview. The old gentleman, it seems, has heard wonders lately of her merits; and was implored by one to whom he showed himself a flinty-hearted father, to stand her friend. And now that he's getting in years (or rather out of years, for the last session all but knocked him up, and I doubt whether he'll ever stand another election), he appears to have a hankering after the only human being left in the world who was dear to those whom he cast off. Nothing would surprise me less, than to see this English-French woman, or French-English woman, whichever

you please to call her, take the head of his house."

"I cannot believe that such a post would be supportable to her," said I, feeling for the dignity of Albertine.

"Pho, pho!" was his contemptuous reply. "Do you fancy me young enough to believe that, with ten thousand a-year going a begging, any Monsieur or Monsieur's daughter, between the Seine and the Garonne, would be ass enough to make mouths about accepting it?"—

"But what made you hesitate, my dear Archdeacon," said I, "to accept my company in your visit to Mrs. Hawley?"

"Because Sir Robert informed me, when I objected to tumble unannounced into the midst of a pack of foreigners, that the family of his grand-daughter were simple-living, simple-hearted folks, quite out of the line of what young fellows, like you and Charley Roxborough, call the world. Which determined me, Master Harry, to go and pay my humdrum visit by myself."

"I had intended, under any circumstances," said I, "to drive down, to-morrow to Monsieur Des Auliers' villa. I shall be most happy if you will take a seat in my carriage!"

"Poor Frank Hawley!" mused my companion, as if following up some chain of invisible associations. "I was the only one of his early friends who exchanged a word with him after his marriage! My friendship for *him* was one of the many causes that created a coolness betwixt me and Hawley Chase. But Frank was my schoolfellow. If he chose to marry a country girl instead of the grim ladyship picked out for him by his father, 'twasn't my business to disinherit him—'twasn't my business to turn the cold shoulder on him.—I dined with the young couple, in their shabby lodgings, the day I christened their baby."

"Wrottesley Hawley?"

"Ay, Wrottesley I think they called him!—The old fellow at the Hall was mighty fond of Frank; and would perhaps have done him a good turn in his will, but for Sir Robert's

interference. But as I was saying, I christened the child; and next day, they were off for France,—where the peace of Amiens took many a fool besides themselves, under the idea that among people who lived upon soup made of pea-shucks, they could manage to get on upon the few hundreds a-year which Francis inherited from his mother."

"When the sudden breaking out of the war rendered them *détenus*," said I,—to whom the whole story had been detailed by Monsieur Des Auliers.

"*Détenus?* Yes; if that's the word for prisoners on parole! And thus, thanks to Sir Robert's obduracy, the sole heir of one of the oldest families in Yorkshire came to be brought up among the frog-eating Monsieurs. And what was the consequence?—On Boney's overthrow in 1814, (poor Frank's little wife having long been laid under the sod) the old gentleman insisted on his son's returning to England, when, as the newspaper advertisements have it, 'all was to be overlooked, and no questions

asked.' But 'twouldn't do. Frank wrote over a heap of rubbish about dreading the humid atmosphere of Yorkshire. — (Humid, indeed! when for fifty miles round Hawley Chase, a humming-bird might fly about after dusk without turning a feather!)—And so the father and son went on year after year, health-hunting at German baths and wintering in Italy; as an excuse for not choosing to live under the roof of a man who'd shown himself such a savage to the poor creature who was dead and gone!"

"The end of all which was, that Francis Hawley died, and his son followed him to the grave, before a cordial reconciliation had been effected with Hawley Chase."

"Exactly! Leaving a widow who——But tell me, Wrottesley my boy," cried the Archdeacon, suddenly interrupting himself, "how comes it, pray, that you're so well up in matters that occurred before you ever set foot in Yorkshire, or looked any living soul of the name of Hawley in the face?—By Jupiter! Something

very much like a new light breaks into my thick head! The indulgence shown by Sir Robert to certain follies of yours which all but merited the mill, arose no doubt from consciousness of the evils wrought in his own family by his obduracy. But till this moment, it never crossed my mind that he might have other motives for letting you trifle away the summer here in Paris; or that the friend he talked of as affording him such interesting accounts of his grandson's widow, was no other than the mad-cap master of what my poor little cousins of the Elms used to call Paradise Lost!"

"You are mistaken, my dear Archdeacon," said I,—"completely mistaken. My intimacy with Mrs. Hawley is unfortunately so recent, that as yet I have had no opportunity of endeavouring to transmit to Sir Robert the favourable impressions I do not deny that she has made upon me."

"After all," he rejoined, as if again thinking aloud, "I don't know but it might be the best

thing that could happen to them all!—The heir-at-law is a Catholic and a skin-flint,—bad things for the neighbourhood—bad things for the county. Whereas the estates would form, if thrown into a ring fence, one of those standard properties which tend to ennoble the district; and, by Jupiter! the blot on poor Roxborough Elms will require a plaguy deal of bleaching to efface. Good night, my boy!" added he aloud, on finding himself at that moment at the foot of Meurice's stair-case.—"We'll settle to-morrow at breakfast the hour for our visit to the future lady of Wrottesley Hall."

Though I accepted the compliment with an embarrassed laugh, I trembled when we took the road to Sceaux the following afternoon, at the mere idea of the indiscretions by which my companion was likely to commit me in the eyes of those who, however frank and *naïf*, were so strictly decorous in word and deed, that the blunt freedoms of the Archdeacon could not but shock and disgust them. The Jesuitical strict-

ness just then prevalent among the Churchmen of Paris, seemed to assign double enormity to the sensuality of his tastes, and downrightness of his manners. Though Monsieur Des Auliers was a man who liked to hear things called by their right names, no one was better aware that many things should remain nameless, and many subjects unbroached. The re-marriage of his niece, for instance, and the conduct of her grandfather, were tabooed—as impossible of discussion at Les Epines.

Just as I was communing within myself, on approaching the sweep-gates of the villa, whether or not to give him a plain lesson or two on French etiquette, and entreat him to spare my own feelings and the blushes of Albertine, a cabriolet drove past us at the utmost speed of the finest horse I ever saw out of England; in which I seemed to discern the faces of two persons,—the presence of one of whom indicated as strongly that the cab had *not* driven out of the gates of Les Epines, as that of the other begot a contrary opinion. The

driver was no other than the handsome stranger who had disappeared so suddenly from Mrs. Hawley's box the preceding night; but his companion was Nestor Platicheff, dressed from top to toe after the plate of "Fashions for July" in the English "World of Fashion."

"A horse dealer and a hair-dresser, I presume?"—cried the Archdeacon, as soon as the dust left flying by their wheels, had a little subsided.

"Beware of saying as much to Mrs. Hawley," I rejoined; "for I suspect they preceded us as her guests."

"I give her up then!" cried he, pulling his shovel hat a little forwarder on his forehead. "By Jupiter, I give her up! If we can judge of a man by the company he keeps, twice as sure is the indication as regards a woman!"

And having reached the door of Les Epines before he attained more than the middle of his lecture, I was obliged to stop short in the little marble hall leading to the saloon, holding him tight by the button, that he might exhaust the

crabbed truths he was venting on the sex in general, and young widows in particular, before I ushered him into the presence of Albertine.

END OF VOL. II.

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